

JANUARY 2007

IN THESE TIMES

Media activists
target sexist billboards

A dark night for Iceland's
environmentalists

SPOILS OF WAR



**Oil, the U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Area and
the Bush Agenda: Antonia Juhasz reports**

PLUS:

**Why progressives have more in
common with the military than they think**

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR MEDIA REFORM

JANUARY 12-14, 2007
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE



MEMPHIS

Presented by
freepress

with **BILL MOYERS**
JANE FONDA
JESSE JACKSON
AMY GOODMAN
PHIL DONAHUE
ROBERT McCHESNEY
HELEN THOMAS
JUAN GONZALEZ
VAN JONES
FCC COMMISSIONERS
AND MANY OTHERS

Shoddy journalism. Partisan spin.
Corporate consolidation. Fake news.
Internet freedom under attack.

These are the problems. It's time to fix them.

Join thousands of activists, media makers, educators, journalists, policymakers and people like you at the National Conference for Media Reform. Come to connect, learn, share and join the movement for reform. Register now at:

www.freepress.net/conference

or call toll-free 1-877-888-1533

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contents

VOLUME 31 - NUMBER 01



FEATURES

- 20 SPOILS OF WAR**
Oil, the U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Area and the Bush Agenda
BY ANTONIA JUHASZ
- 26 CHAVEZ CONSOLIDATES POWER**
Venezuela's "revolutionary process" seems set to accelerate
BY STEVE ELLNER
- 28 LOVE THE WARRIOR, HATE THE WAR**
Why progressives have more in common with the military than they think
BY LORELI KELLY
- 30 DOES ANDY STERN TALK HIS WALK?**
SEIU's president seems torn between cooperation and conflict
BY DAVID MOBERG
- 33 A DARK NIGHT IN ICELAND**
Environmentalists decry the privatization of their country's clean-energy resources
BY ANDREW STELZER
- 36 KIKO MARTINEZ: WATCH LISTED FOR LIFE**
A civil rights lawyer is not taking his harassment lightly
BY KARI LYDERSEN

FRONTLINE

8 AMERICA'S SLAVE LABOR

Prisoners are being forced to work in toxic sweatshops
BY CHRISTOPHER MORAFF

ALSO:

- Street battles in Oaxaca
- Chicago media activists notch a victory
- MoveOn's Call for Change
- Is the School of the Americas finally closing?

12 APPALL-O-METER

BY DAVE MULCAHEY

VIEWS

14 BACK TALK

Those crazy, eerily prescient leftists
BY SUSAN J. DOUGLAS

15 THE THIRD COAST

The Caracas Consensus
BY SALIM MUWAKKIL

16 VIEWPOINT

Diary of a Guantánamo lawyer
BY H. CANDACE GORMAN

17 DROPPIN' A DIME

Since when does art = white?
BY LAURA S. WASHINGTON

18 THE FIRST STONE

Voting machine problems?
In Florida? No way!
BY JOEL BLEIFUSS

CULTURE

38 CHILDREN OF THE BRAND

Kids learn a lot more at Borders than just a love of reading
BY DANIEL THOMAS COOK

ALSO:

- James Bond: psychopath
- Gardening during wartime
- Some people go *Beyond the Call*

45 HEALTH & SCIENCE

Iraq's health care system: another casualty of war
BY TERRY J. ALLEN

48 NON-LETHAL WEAPONRY: THE NEXT GENERATION

From force fields to phasers, the future is now
BY SILJA J.A. TALVI

Outlawing Legal Bribery

ACCORDING TO A NATIONAL exit poll, 42 percent of voters in November's election said that corruption was the most important factor in deciding who they voted for. Incoming Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) has pledged that, within 100 hours of taking up the gavel, House Democrats will "sever the ties between legislation and lobbyists." And Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-Ill.), chairman of the Democratic caucus, sent a letter to colleagues in which he wrote, "Failing to deliver on this promise would be devastating to our standing with the public. ... The voters are looking to us for leadership, and it starts with real reform."

Some reforms will no doubt be enacted in the first 100 hours of the new Congress. How "real" they will be is another question.

Requiring members of Congress to disclose contacts with lobbyists is a no-brainer. Similarly, it is a good idea to ban congressmen-turned-registered-lobbyists from the floor of the House or Senate.

Other proposed reforms are window dressing, like extending the prohibition against members of Congress returning to lobby their colleagues from one year after leaving office to two. According to a July 2005 report by Public Citizen, 43 percent of members of Congress who left office since 1998 cashed in on K Street. Instead of trying to regulate it, Congress could close the revolving door, and prohibit former members and their staff from going to work as lobbyists.

Other clean government ideas are likely to go nowhere. Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) has proposed an office of public integrity. This independent commission, composed of retired judges and members of Congress, would have the power to investigate, subpoena documents and witnesses, and report back to the Department of Justice and the House and Senate ethics committees. His idea has few backers.

Then, there is the ban on lobbyists giving meals, trips and gifts to members of Congress. A no-brainer? More like a red her-

ring. Lobbyists wield influence not by picking up the dinner tab, but as point people for the private interests that fund the campaigns of those elected to public office.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, in the 2006 election the candidate who spent the most money won in 93 percent of the House races and 67 percent of the Senate races. The average cost of winning a House race was just shy of \$1 million. A Senate seat comes closer to \$7.8 million.

This should be a national scandal. But members of Congress, who as incumbents have a fundraising advantage over challengers, have no incentive to make a public issue of the legal bribery from which they benefit—and act on.

Take the national health care crisis. Approximately 50 percent of the more than 1 million people who filed for bankruptcy in 2006 did so because of illness or medical debt. What's more, some 46 million Americans lack health insurance—putting them one major illness away from financial insolvency.

Yet, Congress shies away from dealing with this scandal. Could that be because in the 2006 midterm election the health care industry gave at least \$72 million to federal candidates and political parties?

The one bright spot is that 108 House members of the 110th Congress have gone on record supporting public funding of congressional elections, including the 40 House members who have signed on as co-sponsors of the Clean Elections Bill. This legislation would institute a program of public financing of federal elections like that currently in states like Maine, Arizona and North Carolina. The Clean Elections Bill will be introduced by Reps. Raul Grijalva (D-Ariz.) and John Tierney (D-Mass.) in the House, and Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) in the Senate.

Passing this bill would be "real reform." Rather than wait for Rahm Emmanuel and other Democrats to exhibit leadership, it's up to progressives to demand that they follow us.

—Joel Bleifuss

IN THESE TIMES

"With liberty and justice for all..."

FOUNDING EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

James Weinstein (1926-2005)

EDITOR Joel Bleifuss

EXECUTIVE EDITOR Jessica Clark

ACTING MANAGING EDITOR Phoebe Connelly

ASSOCIATE EDITOR Brian Cook

EDITOR-AT-LARGE Sheryl Larson

SENIOR EDITORS Craig Aaron, Terry J. Allen, Patricia Aufderheide, Lakshmi Chaudhry, Susan J. Douglas, Christopher Hayes, David Moberg, Dave Mulcahey, Salim Muwakkil, David Sirota, Silja J.A. Talvi, Kurt Vonnegut, Laura S. Washington

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Dean Baker, Frida Berrigan, Will Boissvert, Phyllis Eckhaus, Barbara Ehrenreich, Annette Fuentes, Juan Gonzalez, Miles Harvey, Paul Hockenjos, George Hodak, Doug Ireland, Hans Johnson, Naomi Klein, John Nichols, James North, James Parker, Kim Phillips-Fein, Jehangir Pocha, Fred Weir, Adam Werbach, Slavoj Žižek

PROOFREADERS Alan Kimmel, Brian O'Grady, Emily Udell, Norman Wishner

INTERNS Nick Burt, Brandon Forbes, Anastasia Masurat, Chelsea Ross, Joshua Steward, Wanda Victores

ART DIRECTOR Rachel Jefferson

ILLUSTRATOR Terry LaBan

WEB DIRECTOR Seamus Holman

PUBLISHER Tracy Van Slyke

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER Aaron Sarver

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER Anna Grace Schneider

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR Peter Hoyt

ADVERTISING AND MARKETING COORDINATOR Erin Polgreen

PUBLISHING INTERNS Mary McKane, Kelly Ragusa, Kamardip Singh

IN THESE TIMES PUBLISHING CONSORTIUM

Grant Abert, Theresa Alt, Aris Anagnos, Stuart Anderson, Collier Hands, Polly Howells and Eric Werthman, Nancy Kricorian and James Schamus, Lisa Lee, Chris Lloyd, Edith Helen Monsees, Dave Rathke, Abby Rockefeller and Lee Halprin, Perry Rosenstein, Lewis Steel, Ellen Stone-Belic, Dan Terkel, Studs Terkel

BOARD OF DIRECTORS Joel Bleifuss, Janet Geovanis,

Robert McChesney, David Moberg, Dave Rathke,

Beth Schulman, Tracy Van Slyke

In These Times (ISSN 0160-5992) is published monthly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 308 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 31, No. 01) went to press on December 15, for newsstand sales from December 29, 2006 to February 9, 2007. The entire contents of *In These Times* are copyright © 2006 by the Institute for Public Affairs, and may not be reproduced in any manner, either in whole or in part, without permission of the publisher. Copies of *In These Times*' contract with the National Writers Union are available upon request. Contact the union at (212) 254-0279 or www.nwu.org.

Subscriptions are \$36.95 a year (\$59 for institutions; \$61.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas). For subscription questions, address changes and back issues call (800) 827-0270.

Complete issues and volumes of *In These Times* are available from Bell and Howell, Ann Arbor, MI. *In These Times* is indexed in the Alternative Press Index and the Left Index. Newsstand circulation through Big Top Newsstand Services, a division of the IPA, at (415) 445-0230, or bigtop@indyexpress.org.

Printed in the United States.



mixed reaction

QUID PRO QUO

THE QUID:

Though they happened back on March 13, 2001, the votes of Sen. Evan Bayh (D-Ind.) on two amendments to the horrific "Bankruptcy Reform" bill deserve another look, now that he appears to be running for president. As John B. Judis reported online for the *New Republic* on Dec. 6, the amendments pushed by Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Chris Dodd (D-Conn.) would have protected college students from being preyed on by credit card companies by either placing caps on maximum debts or requiring parental consent before signing up. Bayh voted against both.

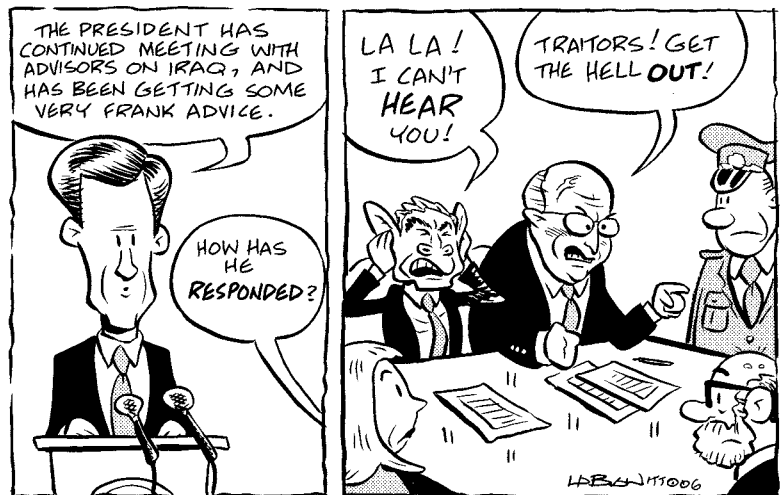
THE QUO:

It must have been an easy call. After all, the finance/credit card industries bought those votes, fair and square, making Bayh the Senate's 10th largest recipient of their campaign contributions. Voting on, say, principle would have been downright ungracious.

“ You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete. ”

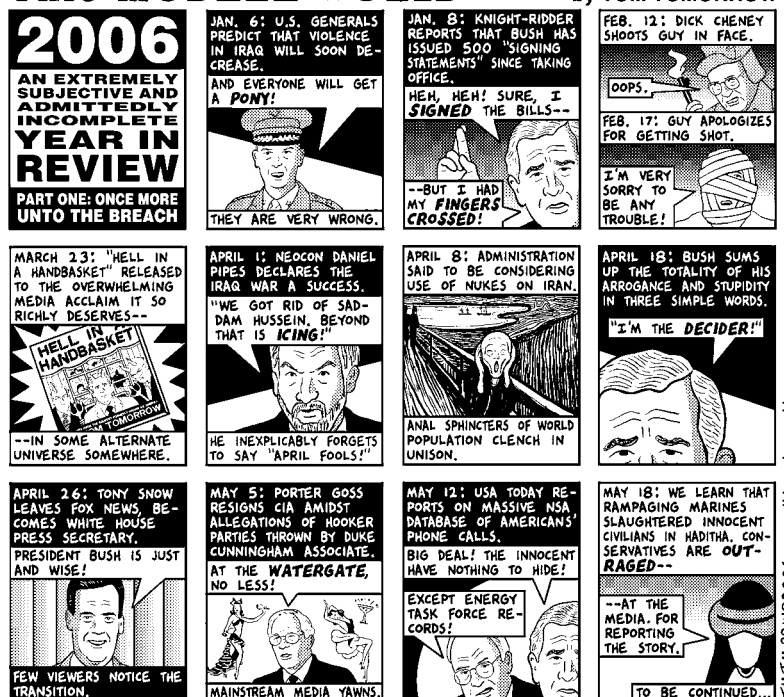
—BUCKMINSTER FULLER

LABANARAMA BY TERRY LABAN



THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



the lexicon

Obamania (ō.bă.mă'ně.ə) n.

neologism:

A mental condition adversely affecting populations that have been starved of politicians with the slightest hint of intelligence.

Symptoms include irrational exuberance and a tendency to compulsively shout out, "He's so charismatic ... and articulate!"

The only known cure is to examine a candidate's decidedly humdrum voting record.

letters



Centrists = Roadkill

I don't mind it terribly when Fox Network personalities advise Democrats to move to the "energetic center." After all, their goal is to keep left-of-center views as far from public awareness as possible. But I don't expect such advice in what is supposed to be a progressive publication ("The Second Clinton Ascendancy," December).

Laura Washington "salivates" at the prospect of Democrats reclaiming the middle after veering off into what she calls "the wilderness of the left." Good lord! In fact, the "center" has moved rightward over the years, so that Jim Hightower's claim that it's just a place for yellow lines and roadkill is too kind. If Washington really thinks Democrats have been functioning in "the wilderness of the left," I must wonder why *In These Times* is publishing opinion I could get from mainstream TV.

Bill Willers
Middleton, Wisc.

It is quite unfortunate that Laura Washington seems to feel that impeachment would mean "exact[ing] partisan re-

venge" ("The Second Clinton Ascendancy," December). Nonsense. John Nichols has it right—impeachment is a necessary mechanism for "ending ... abuses" and "restoring a balance of power" ("In Praise of Impeachment," December). To not impeach Bush and Cheney is to, at best, excuse and, at worst, validate their excesses.

Matt Corsaro
via e-mail

Free D.C.!

Congratulations to Laura S. Washington for identifying the disenfranchisement of the District of Columbia as an unrealized part of the civil rights struggle ("Make Democrats Earn Black Votes," November). Washington even understates the District's lack of congressional representation—while we have no recognized voice in the Senate, our "representative" in the House is not even permitted to vote on legislation that reaches the floor.

The District's status as a majority African-American jurisdiction has been a real if unstated reason for Congress' refusal to grant statehood and representation—a fact that should rally African-American members of Congress, as well as all advocates of social justice, to the cause of full democracy for D.C. Supporters of civil and human rights—in the United States and around the world—can visit freedc.org to learn how they can link up with a growing grassroots movement that is demanding the full rights of U.S. citizenship for the 550,000 residents of our nation's capital.

Bill Mosley
Washington, D.C.

Is it 4:20?

Lakshmi Chaudhry's "The Godless Fundamentalist" (December) was absurd, absolute dreck—this from a writer who in your last issue had a splendid round-up on the social science of bullying ("The Power of Mean," November).

To compare Richard Dawkins, an ardent scholar and thinker, with religious "fundamentalists" is laughable nonsense. To go against the accumulated weight of millennia of religious indoctrination takes the honor and dignity of a thousand religious charlatans. Chaudhry's bizarre park-bench invective now completes the "liberal magazine" old guard's fusty dithering response to the Dawkins/Harris phenomenon of committed public atheism. Not one of these pince-nez "leftish" thinkers give the slightest ground to the rigorous demands of skeptical humanism: Marilynne Robinson bloviating in *Harper's* or Eyal Press going soft and accommodating in *The Nation*.

Could we have some honest, real debate? I have no idea what Chaudhry meant by "the antidote to fanaticism is not a new Puritanism of reason, but the contradictory, ambiguous, compromised reality of ordinary human experience," but I sure would like to try what's in the bong that produced that.

Martin White
Salem, N.Y.

I find Lakshmi Chudhry's account of atheist Richard Dawkins' positions in your December issue to be inac-

curate and self-serving. To my knowledge, Dawkins has never asserted that one needs to have "faith" in the scientific method. Faith and science are, in fact, polar opposites: the former relies on dogmatic resistance to change, and the latter thrives on it.

Yes, of course religious beliefs have evolved, but only over long time periods. Religion and tradition may be considered synonymous over most individuals' lifetimes. The fundamental distinction that eludes Chaudhry is that science challenges itself every second it is practiced, with the advancement of objective knowledge being the only goal, and all else, even the most tried-and-true theories, are always—always—subject to revision as we develop our understanding further. That is the core of the scientific method.

Further, Dawkins would never suggest that the scientific method will reveal "all" in good time, a flawed premise which she then uses to assert that Dawkins treats science the same way religious extremists treat faith. In a televised lecture, Dawkins specifically allowed that some things may remain forever unknowable. However, he was clear that because some things may elude our understanding, that is no reason to ascribe them to some invisible man who lives in the sky.

Religion does represent an integral part of what defines us as human and must be acknowledged as such. But in my reading of history, the ones who have murdered to protect their views against

challenge were, and still are, the religious zealots, not the scientists. Conflating the two is profane.

*Duane Galensky
via e-mail*

Attack of the Sludge

It is good to see that Joel Bleifuss is still exposing the dangers of using toxic bacterial contaminated sewage sludge and sewage effluent to fertilizer the crops we eat and the lawns on which our children play ("The E. coli Free Market," November). Best of all, Joel is still putting the spotlight on Alan Rubin, who claims credit for a sludge disposal (dumping) regulation based on exclusions in the federal environmental laws.

In the 17 years since the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) first proposed its sewage sludge dumping regulation, so-called food-borne illnesses have skyrocketed from about 2 million cases a year to 81 million in 1997. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has claimed that, for the past few years, food-borne illness are holding steady at about 76 million cases a year with about 5,000 deaths.

The CDC doesn't want to account for the fact that sewage treatment plants are turning non-lethal bacteria such as E. coli into super-lethal bacteria like E. coli 0157.

The EPA did some of the first studies on gene transfer in the treatment plant, and it seems Alan Rubin failed to find the studies.

With 5,000 deaths annually from contaminated food and exposure to the deadly microbes on our lawns and in our water, we really should pay more attention to our own homegrown terrorists. These are the people who write the regulations and issue the permits to kill those 5,000 innocent people every year.

*Jim Bynum
via e-mail*

CORRECTIONS

The name of the artist in November's "Art Space" was misspelled. Her name is Renee Prisble Una, and her work can be found at <http://una-love.com/wheel>.

In "Outing is In Again" (December), Thomas Foley, the former Democratic House Speaker gay-baited by Newt Gingrich, was erroneously listed as a representative of Florida. He represented Washington state.

Finally, "Cholera and the City" (December) erroneously stated that Dhaka and Nairobi have populations approaching 20 million people. Dhaka's population is 7 million. Nairobi's is 4 million.

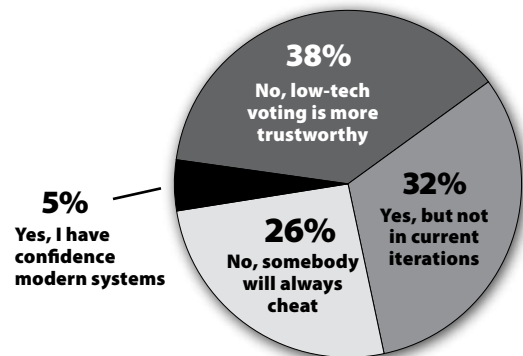
this month @ IN THESE TIMES

Help us brainstorm: This issue marks one year of our redesign; we're looking for your input on what works and what doesn't.

What's your favorite department? "Act Now," on p. 10? "Excerpt" on p. 44? Which one do you skip? What would you like to see more of? E-mail your suggestions to phoebe@inthesetimes.com, subject line: "Brainstorm."

And help us celebrate: Our next issue will mark the magazine's 30th anniversary—the perfect occasion to purchase an ad for your favorite cause or nonprofit. Contact erin@inthesetimes.com for details.

Can electronic voting be accurate?



Cast your vote or discuss at www.inthesetimes.com/polls

how to reach us

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We encourage letters to the editor, and reserve the right to edit them for clarity, grammar and length. Send them to: 2040 North Milwaukee Avenue, Chicago, IL 60647. Or submit them electronically at: www.inthesetimes.com/site/about/contact. Please include your full name and address.

SPECIAL REQUESTS

To inquire about lost or damaged issues, back issues and classroom subscriptions, please contact Anna Grace Schneider at anna@inthesetimes.com.

SUBSCRIPTION QUESTIONS

To renew your subscription or change your address, please call 1-800-827-0270.

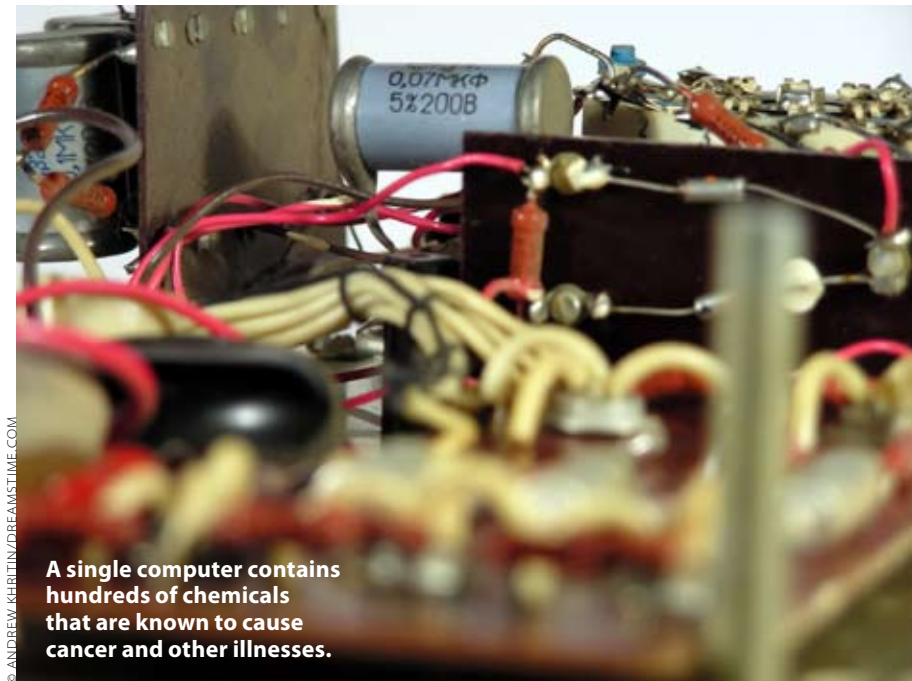
ADVERTISING

To advertise or to request a media kit, please contact Erin Polgreen at erin@inthesetimes.com.

YOUR IDEALS CAN LIVE ON.

REMEMBER IN THESE TIMES IN YOUR WILL.

For more information call Tracy Van Slyke at 773-772-0100 x243 or e-mail her at: tracy@inthesetimes.com.



A single computer contains hundreds of chemicals that are known to cause cancer and other illnesses.

America's Slave Labor

Inmates are being forced to work in toxic 'e-waste' sweatshops

BY CHRISTOPHER MORAFF

U.S. PRISONERS WORKING FOR a computer-recycling operation run by Federal Prison Industries (FPI) are being exposed to a toxic cocktail of hazardous chemicals through their prison jobs while efforts by some prison officials to protect them have been met with stonewalling and subterfuge.

Since 1994, FPI has used inmates to disassemble electronic waste (e-waste)—the detritus of obsolete computers, televisions and related electronics goods—for recycling. According to a new report, "Toxic Sweatshops"—published jointly by the Texas Campaign for the Environment, California-based Computer Take-Back Campaign and the Prison Activist Resource Center—the waste contains high levels of arsenic, selenium, mercury, lead, dioxins and beryllium—all considered dangerous by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The report follows three years of mounting scrutiny of FPI by the U.S. Office of the Special Counsel, the Operational Safety and Health Organization (OSHA) and Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. Critics say that the scrutiny has led to few reforms.

FPI, which operates as a unit of the semi-autonomous, government-run corporation UNICOR, opened its first electronics recycling business at a federal prison in Marianna, Florida, in 1994. Since then, the company's electronics recycling program has spread to six other federal prisons across the country. Inmates working for UNICOR are paid between 23 cents and \$1.15 per hour. In 2005 the company recorded \$64.5 million in profits.

The problems outlined in "Toxic Sweatshops" first came to light in 2002, when UNICOR opened a recycling shop in Atwater Federal Prison, a maximum-security facility in Merced, California. Among

their duties, prisoners at the facility were charged with separating glass cathode ray tubes (CRT) from computer monitors. Sometimes they were given hammers; other times, they were forced to improvise.

"When the operation began, most glass room workers would heft the CRT to head height and slam the CRT down on the metal table and keep slamming it on the table until the glass broke away from whatever they were trying to remove," said one prisoner quoted in the report. "We were getting showers of glass and chemicals out of the tube."

A single computer contains hundreds of chemicals—including up to 8 pounds of lead—that are known to cause cancer, respiratory illness and reproductive problems, says the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition. Prisoners interviewed for the report cite health issues, including slow-healing wounds, sinus problems, headaches, fatigue, and burning skin, eyes, noses and throats. Since no one on the recycling floor was issued proper protective gear, the guards and other personnel who supervised the inmates fared little better.

Leroy Smith, a health and safety manager at the facility, became concerned when air quality tests that he initiated showed elevated levels of toxins in the recycling center, which sat just feet from a food-processing area. After each test, Smith said, he would suspend operations and request further safety measures, only to be overridden by Atwater Federal Prison officials and UNICOR supervisors who insisted there was no safety threat.

In December 2004, after being repeatedly rebuffed by his superiors, Smith took his case public—first filing a complaint with OSHA, and then with the U.S. Office of the Special Counsel (OSC)—an independent federal investigative agency with responsibility over federal employees.

What followed, says his attorney Mary Dryovage, was a Kafkaesque trip through bureaucratic hell. "OSHA has no jurisdiction over UNICOR, but since there were a few Bureau of Prison employees in the facility, they decided to come out," Dryovage says.

But, she says, in an unprecedented move, OSHA scheduled the inspection in advance, giving UNICOR management a three-week head-start to clean

up their act. "By the time they came, management had loaded all the computer parts onto trucks and shipped them out," Dryovage says. "There was nothing there for them to find."

According to watchdog group Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, over the course of the next year the Bureau of Prisons continued to downplay the severity of the problem and, along with UNICOR management, launched a campaign of intimidation against Smith and anyone else they suspected of aiding him.

"I received verbal threats of demotion, negative log entries, denial of promotion and threats of disciplinary action, among other things" Smith says.

In October 2004, on doctors' orders, Smith, a father of five and a 13-year employee of the Bureau of Prisons, left his job on medical leave. He was forced out, he insists, by work-related stress caused by retaliation against him for speaking out. It would take more than a year before the prison agreed to take him back.

Dryovage joined the case in March 2005 and filed a whistleblower protec-

tion suit with OSC on Smith's behalf. Throughout the case, she says, UNICOR remained hidden behind a cloak of immunity, with prison authorities taking the blows. When Atwater's warden, Paul M. Schultz, finally decided to cooperate with Smith's case in 2005, Schultz was relieved of his position and transferred across the country to New Jersey.

"[UNICOR] basically has a sweetheart deal that nobody can look into or go about challenging," Dryovage says. "It's sort of like dealing with the Mafia. They have ways of getting you to back off."

Proponents of the company say UNICOR reduces inmate recidivism by offering essential on-the-job training. Dryovage laughs that off: "Tell me, what kind of job training does an inmate get smashing a computer to pieces with a hammer?"

In the summer of 2005, the Bureau of Prisons conceded that prisoners and staff members in at least three UNICOR facilities had been exposed to toxins that exceeded federal limits and issued a report claiming the problems had been fixed. But last spring, OSC contradicted that

assessment—citing holes in the Bureau's findings—and called for a thorough investigation. In May, the case was referred to the Inspector General for the U.S. Justice Department, which has authority over the federal prison system. That investigation is ongoing.

Today, Smith volunteers his time as an advocate for staff and inmates who continue to work under unsafe conditions at UNICOR recycling facilities. In September, Smith was named OSC's "Public Servant of the Year" for 2006—an award he says is bittersweet.

"The dangers that I identified go unremedied," says Smith. "Daily, I receive phone calls from my colleagues working in computer recycling operations ... who describe coming home coated in dust. Even though it now acknowledges safety deficiencies, the Bureau of Prisons is not offering medical screening or assistance." ■

CHRISTOPHER MORAFF is a Philadelphia-based writer, whose work has appeared in *In These Times*, *the American Prospect* Online and *Boulder Weekly*, among other publications.

Urban MEDITATIONS

By Kip Tiernan and Fran Froehlich

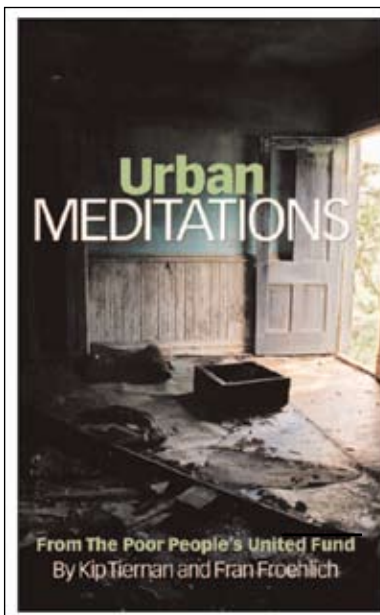
From the founders of Rosie's Place, Community Works, and the Greater Boston Food Bank

"Urban Meditations are illuminated manuscripts for these Dark Ages. This is 'religion' brought back to the dirty streets that humanity's greatest prophets have walked side by side with the 'least' of us. These meditations light a better way through a period of our history when words like 'truth,' 'democracy,' and yes—even 'Jesus'—have been hijacked."

Michael Patrick MacDonald, author of *All Souls: A Family Story from Southie* and his new book *Easter Rising — An Irish American Coming Up from Under*

"Kip Tiernan writes from the margins of power. These meditations hold up the prophet's dangerous weapon—a mirror. They offer, too, hope: a vision of a new earth where all are at the table. This is outcast theology from a wisdom teacher. Now 80, Kippy is still flipping over the money tables where we left our hearts. She invites us, too, to do some upsetting of the imperial furniture that keeps us comfortable."

Renny Golden, author of *War on Families — Imprisoned Mothers and the Children They Leave Behind* and co-author *Oscar Romero, His Life and Writings*



\$20.00 — Proceeds fund the Poor Peoples' United Fund's work to feed the hungry and shelter the homeless. PPUF is another service organization founded by Tiernan and Froehlich. Extra donations are most welcome and tax deductible.

To Order

To purchase, please send the order form with a check or Visa or MasterCard information to the Poor People's United Fund, 645 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116 or visit www.ppuf.org to order there. Please mention this ad if ordering on the website.

☐ Check Enclosed — \$20.00

☐ I've included a donation of \$ _____

☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Card # _____

Exp. date _____ Phone _____

Cardholder _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-mail _____

Poor People's United Fund, 645 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116 • 617-262-5922

www.ppuf.org

itt—jan07



JOHN GIBLER

Oaxacan women line up in front of riot police to defend the university campus.

Street Battles in Oaxaca

OAXACA CITY, MEXICO—At 8 a.m. on November 2, police came to remove the last barricade. After clearing away the rubble and city buses used to block the major Cinco Señores intersection, several hundred riot police and special forces from the Federal Preventive Police (PFP) took positions along University Avenue on either side of the Autonomous State University of Oaxaca. Two groups of police forces armed with submachine guns, tear gas grenades, riot shields and batons prepared to advance, with military helicopters circling overhead and anti-riot tanks gunning their motors behind. Only the charred skeleton of an old bus, stretched across University Avenue halfway between the two police lines, remained.

The commander of the federal police, who would not give his name, said that they had no intention of invading the university campus, home to the occupied radio station that protesters from the Oaxaca Peoples' Popular Assembly (APPO) had used for months to coordinate their civil disobedience uprising against Governor Ulises Ruíz Ortiz. "They are in their house," the commander said, "and we did not come here to kick them out."

The students saw otherwise.

Soon, residents from surrounding neighborhoods trickled into the streets to stand before the lines of riot police, talking, pleading and screaming at them not to advance, not to attack the university. The crowd swelled and by 10 a.m.,

students began to leap over the campus walls and join in, carrying junked cars, old tires and fallen telephone poles to build a new barricade only 10 feet from the federal police, and then set it on fire. The students shouted at the police, waving their sticks, rocks, slingshots and Molotov cocktails in the air.

Then one of the helicopters overhead fired tear gas grenades inside the campus, and the students unleashed a torrential volley of rocks and bottles. To the west, a morning soccer game froze in mid-play before both teams and the referees ran to gather rocks and join the defense.

It would take four hours, with thousands of students and nearby residents waging the fight, before the PFP finally retreated at 3 p.m. and the barricade of Cinco Señores was rebuilt.

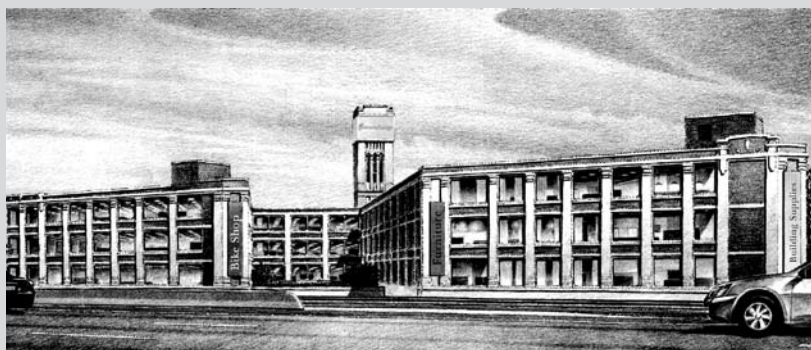
The confrontation was the first open battle with police since teachers and local residents defeated state riot police in their pre-dawn raid on the striking teachers' encampment on June 14. Created to support the teachers' union after June's failed police raid, the APPO had responded to armed paramilitary attacks only by organizing barricades—thousands of barricades—across Oaxaca City every night.

When the PFP entered Oaxaca on October 29, the APPO called on protesters to turn and march with the police into the city rather than confront them. But state police in unmarked cars began a terror campaign, shooting, abducting, and brutally torturing university students and barricade volunteers in broad daylight.

The resulting rage catalyzed with the euphoria of victory on November 2, creating an urge for more battle. During a massive march on November 5, APPO organizers formed human chains in front of the police to keep protesters from throwing rocks or Molotov cocktails. But on November 20, after yet another, smaller march to commemorate the Mexican Revolution, four masked men threw rocks at the police lines outside of the town square. The police responded with tear gas and began to advance on the protesters, who retreated several blocks. After three hours of fighting, the APPO—blaming agitators for throwing the first rocks—gave the order to retreat and prepare a November 25 action.

The plan was to lead another massive march into the city center and peacefully surround the PFP—at a distance of a full city block—keeping them trapped in the

act now



BREAKING NEW GROUND

On November 15, Baum Development, a Chicago-based realty group, began construction of the Green Exchange, the first "business community" committed to sustainable business practices in the United States. It's the brainchild of Barry Bursak, a furniture designer and long-time environmentalist, who was trying to bring sustainable home furnishings to Chicago when the idea for a "sympiotic community" of progressive businesses came to him. "I can't believe [Baum] said yes," Bursak quips. "No one ever listens to me!" The Green Exchange is scheduled to open in mid-2007. For more information, visit greenexchange.com.

—Erin Polgreen

town square for 48 hours. But the plan did not hold. When PFP agents stole a protester's cooler of soda, young and enraged APPO members responded by throwing rocks and firing bottle rockets through plastic tubes.

The battle lasted for three hours and ended with the PFP using full force—tear gas, riot tanks, machine gun fire—to drive the protesters out of the center and surround them, beating and detaining over 140 people. That night, federal and state police pulled wounded protesters out of hospitals at gun point, raided houses and patrolled the city in convoys of pickup trucks carrying special forces officers. The campaign stretched over a week, forcing movement leaders and participants alike into hiding.

But on December 10, more than 10,000 members of the APPO reemerged to march in Oaxaca City, demanding Ruíz's ouster and an end to the repression of the movement.

"People are moving beyond the fear," says Fernando Soberanes, an indigenous teacher and member of the APPO who has participated in the movement from day one. "We are returning to the streets."

—John Gibler

Portrait of the Activists as Young Women

IT'S BEEN MORE than a year since the ads for 107.9 FM (La Ley) cropped up in Chicago—buses and billboards plastered with 25 women in Daisy-Dukes, leaning over, their rears pointed to the camera. "25 Pegaditas (25 Hits)," the ad proclaimed.

Ostensibly, the ads touted the station playing 25 songs in a row. But they used Mexican slang that, as in English, gave "hits" the double meaning of chart-toppers and physical blows. For Females United For Action (FUFA), it was too much.

Formed in the spring of 2005, FUFA is a coalition of young women dedicated to examining and challenging how the media portray women. Six community organizations from around Chicago send their members to the group, and girls are also welcome to join as individuals. The extraordinarily diverse group of about 20 girls operates by consensus—they discuss

a problem they've seen in their communities and come up with an action that every member can participate in.

La Ley became FUFA's first commercial target. "We'd been talking about portrayals of women in the media, and how that is one of the root causes of violence against women," says Adaku Utah, a black 22-year-old youth organizer at the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health. So in December 2005, FUFA sent a letter to La Ley requesting a meeting and started calling the station regularly. Receiving no response, they held a walk-in to demand a meeting. "The first time that we met with them we went to the office unannounced. About 12 of us showed up," says Utah.

The female communications staffer they met with was sympathetic, but told them the campaign came from the station's parent company in Miami, Spanish Broadcasting System (SBS). According to its Web site, SBS "currently owns and/or operates 20 stations in seven of the top ten U.S. Hispanic markets, including Los Angeles, New York, Puerto Rico, Miami, Chicago and San Francisco."

FUFA members had used guesswork to get Vice President and General Manager Jeff Shrinksy's e-mail. After badgering him and SBS for months, the company responded in March: "[W]e strongly disagree with your conclusions ... [but] your objections have been duly noted and will be considered in all future advertising campaigns."

Yunuen Rodriguez, a 19-year-old Latina whose focus is immigration issues, finds this laughable. "It took a whole group of professionals to put together this ad," she says, "and none of them, not a single one of them, ever thought [pegaditas] meant another thing?"

At the time of the campaign, Rodriguez was working long, sometimes 12-hour shifts at a factory where the station of choice was La Ley. She started asking her co-workers what they thought of the ads. "They'd say, 'Well, I don't think that's good,' or 'I don't really think that reflects me,' even though they liked they radio station." This campaign was her first foray into media activism. "It opened my eyes to a whole new degrading image of my community, something that's fictional and not real."

By late spring, the ads were down—the campaign they'd been part of was over. But FUFA continued to write and call SBS, asking them to address the under-



The offending billboard: Hit it or quit it?

lying thinking behind the ads. The result this time was a letter that offered FUFA a chance to speak on air about the connection between ads and violence against women. The girls are now negotiating with the station over the airtime they'll receive. They want to be on air during normal hours and preferably live, so listeners can call in to ask them questions.

Having tangled once with a big media company, FUFA is still frustrated. "It's absolutely horrible, it's huge control by a few white men who obviously don't care about the images they put out there," says Utah.

The young women say they are continuing to focus on the media. "It's a venue that a lot of people are using to define and express themselves," says Utah. "Would you be OK if your mom or daughter was represented in this way? And what does it mean that you sit here and feel that it's OK? If more people were willing to do something about it, I think there would be a media revolution right now."

—Phoebe Connelly

MoveOn Members' Call for Change

IN THE LEAD up to the midterm elections, MoveOn.org paid little attention to the Virginia Senate race, figuring that Republican incumbent George Allen would cruise to re-election over Jim Webb. But when Allen dropped a racial epithet on a young Webb aide and things tightened up, MoveOn took notice.

"We weren't going to get involved in Virginia," says Jennifer Lindenauer, the organization's communications director. "But then we saw that it was a race where we could make an impact." In less than

two months, MoveOn directed 503,181 volunteer phone calls into Virginia. On Election Day, Webb ousted Allen by a mere 7,236 votes.

How did MoveOn almost instantaneously switch gears, perhaps altering the country's political landscape? The answer is Call for Change, a new Web-based phone-banking program. Call for Change sets volunteers up with a user-friendly Web site offering a script, phone numbers and a call-reporting system. Volunteers, often using cell phones with free long-distance, are given call lists of infrequent Democratic and independent voters in competitive states or districts across the country.

MoveOn uses the term "liquid" to describe the program's adaptability. "If we find a race that is competitive on Monday, we can call into that race as early as Tuesday or Wednesday," says Lindenauer. "It's the kind of program we needed in an election season where things were changing so quickly."

Volunteers really took to Call for Change. In a little more than three months, 185,000 MoveOn members placed more than 7 million calls into 61 targeted districts, in-

cluding some of the most disputed battlegrounds. Calling from their homes or at MoveOn-sponsored "calling parties," members were able to reach potential voters in crucial races like Claire McCaskill's Missouri Senate victory (230,808 calls) and Joe Courtney's 170-vote triumph in Connecticut's 2nd Congressional district (103,862 calls). "If you look at the margin of victory compared to the number of phone calls in the key races," Lindenauer says, "it's pretty astounding."

While it is too early—and unrealistic—to anoint MoveOn as the Democratic Party's savior, evidence suggests their efforts were likely productive. A Yale study, which examined a prototype program used this past summer in a California special election, found that MoveOn's efforts increased voter turnout by almost four percent. Donald Green, a Yale University political science professor and author of *Get Out the Vote! How to Increase Voter Turnout*, believes that programs like Call for Change can mobilize the electorate if executed properly. "Volunteer phone banking, especially compared to robo-calls, is effective," he says. "Callers are more authentic."

Perhaps most notably, Call for Change's

technology allows MoveOn members who live in uncompetitive districts to participate in close campaigns. It also harnesses the power of the time-strapped. "It allows people to make a difference even if they only have five or 10 minutes," says Lindenauer.

Yet MoveOn's efforts are not universally lauded. Evan Hutchinson, the former state director of Ohio Vote Mob 2004, believes phone banking can be a risky proposition as voters—particularly undecided ones—are suspicious of calls flowing in from outside their district. "For a lot of middle-class voters, [volunteer phone banking] can seem intrusive and inappropriate," he says. "When the calls are piled on, people get pissed and they shut down."

By only throwing resources into competitive national races for short spurts, Hutchinson also says MoveOn fails to build local power and engage citizens around issues beyond the ballot box. "They don't have the capability to build localized, long-term organizational structures," says Hutchinson.

Bob Miller, however, disagrees. A resident of Three Oaks in southwestern Michigan,

appall-o-meter

3.3 Scenes From A Marriage

If for no other reason, we should thank Sacha Baron Cohen and his movie, *Borat*, for splitting up the humanoid life forms known as Kid Rock and Pamela Anderson.

According to the *New York Post*, friends invited the couple to a private screening of the movie, which mocks Anderson as the ideal of American T and A. She was in on the joke, but her buffoonish husband (a.k.a. Bob Richie) was not and flew into a rage.

"Bob started screaming at Pam," a friend of the couple told the *Post*, "saying she had humiliated herself and telling her, 'You're nothing but a whore! You're a slut! How could you do that movie?'—in front of everyone. It was very embarrassing."

Bob apparently has never Googled his bride.

1.4 Home Cookin'

Crystal meth—it's not just for slack-jawed red-staters anymore. Apparently, the potent stimulant of choice in the great flyover has made a foothold in Gotham. The *New York Daily News* reports

that federal agents busted up nine different meth labs around the city in a recent sweep.

"A new animal has been unleashed in New York City," a DEA official told the paper. But a closer look at the suspects reveals a less lurid reality. Those caught in the dragnet were mostly do-it-yourself users stupid enough to have bought ingredients from online suppliers.

One home-cooker was Michael Knibb, a vice president for information technology for Citigroup, who allegedly installed a lab in his midtown penthouse apartment. ("He's a real gentleman," a building employee told the *Daily News*. "He rides a motorcycle and has a high-paying job.") Another dangerous meth fiend caught in the sweep: Mehmetcan Dosemeci, 28, a doctoral student in history at Columbia University and a Fulbright scholar, who was using the drug to help him finish his dissertation.

Throw away the key!



0.6 Something in the Air Tonight

An American Airlines flight from Washington to Dallas was forced to make an emergency landing in Nashville recently after passengers detected the unmistakable odor of struck matches, reports the *Tennessean*. No doubt fearing a reprise of

the infamous "shoe bomber" incident of some years ago, federal authorities emptied the plane after it touched down and searched the craft with bomb-sniffing dogs. The dogs turned up burnt matches.

Under questioning, a Dallas area woman admitted to FBI agents that she had been the one lighting matches. But she did it, she explained, merely to mask her affliction of nonstop flatulence. Authorities decided not to press charges, but the poor woman is unlikely to fly again anytime soon. When will people learn that the cover-up is worse than the crime?

—Dave Mulcahey

Miller and his neighbors formed Baseline America as a result of MoveOn e-mails. For two years, the group has met monthly to engage in various political discussions and actions. This election season, they targeted their Republican congressmen, 20-year incumbent Fred Upton, and helped the Democratic challenger cut 10 percentage points off Upton's 2004 victory total.

Members of Baseline America also participated in Call for Change and believed the program was worthwhile. Calling mostly into Indiana's 2nd congressional district, where Democrat Joe Donnelly won by 15,145 votes, phone bankers were met with more cordiality than disdain. "Our members reported that their experiences were great," says Miller. "Folks were glad to talk and to find out that people were doing this work."

—Adam Doster

The End of the School of the Americas?

THE ANNUAL PROTESTS against the School of the Americas—the U.S. Army's training institute for Latin American military leaders—are unlike any in the United States. Choreographed by Catholic activists, they eschew the militant rhetoric, providing a moving experience for both religious and secular activists.

The protests began in 1990 with some 10 people, and grew to their largest in 2006. Now, with a Democratic Congress and a changing political climate in Latin America, they have an opportunity to close the School of the Americas for good.

On November 19, some 22,000 people took part in the 16th annual protest in front of the gates of Fort Benning in Georgia. On a stage, organizers from School of the Americas Watch (SOAW) read off the names of most revered "saints"—victims of repression in Latin America whose tormenters had been trained by the School of the Americas (now called the Western Hemisphere Institute of Security Cooperation—WHINSEC). First on the list were some of those killed in El Salvador in the '80s: Archbishop Oscar Romero, the four American religious women, and six Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter.

This year, only 16 protesters committed

snapshot



DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES — A construction worker from Pakistan poses on a building site in Dubai on December 5, 2006. An estimated 20 percent of the world's cranes fill Dubai's skyline as this city of 1.4 million establishes itself as one of the great international tourist destinations. (Photo by Chris Jackson/Getty Images)

civil disobedience by "crossing the line"—that is, crawling under or through the wire mesh fence that encircles the base to face immediate arrest for trespassing and a likely three-month sentence. Last year, 32 were arrested and served time in jail as "prisoners of conscience." (I was one of them and served three months at Danbury Prison Camp in Connecticut.)

Organizers and participants believe that the school's days are numbered. Recently elected leaders like Evo Morales and Michelle Bachelet, both former activists, have intimate knowledge of the repressive tendencies of the U.S.-trained militaries in their countries.

Maryknoll priest Roy Bourgeois, founder of SOAW, crisscrossed South America last year, asking leaders and human rights groups to urge their governments to stop sending soldiers to the school. "There is no need to explain the atrocities of the SOA, as the people of Uruguay are fully aware of this reality, having experienced first hand the horrors of the tortures, detentions, imprisonments and 'disappearances' caused by its graduates," Azucena Berrutti, the newly appointed Defense Minister of Uruguay and a former human

rights lawyer said recently.

So far, Venezuela, Uruguay and Argentina officials have said that none of their military personnel will be sent to the school. But according to the Center for International Policy Web site, those countries accounted for only 2 percent of the students last year. Countries with continuing human rights abuses and a culture of impunity are the major participants: Colombia (42 percent), Honduras (15 percent) and Peru (11 percent).

On the home front, efforts to close the school through congressional action look brighter. Last June, an amendment sponsored by Reps. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.) and John Lewis (D-Ga.) that would cut funding for the SOA/WHINSEC was defeated by a 15-vote margin. Pat Bowman, legislative coordinator for SOAW, was elated as the November election returns came in. "It's fantastic," she wrote in an e-mail. "Thirty-five of our opponents lost their seats in Congress, 23 of which were replaced by Democrats. This is about double the margin of victory we need next year!" McGovern will reintroduce legislation in the 110th Congress.

—Robin Lloyd

BY SUSAN J. DOUGLAS

I Hate to Say 'We Told You So,' But ...



NOW THAT THE Bush administration has sustained massive, serial repudiations of its tragic folly in Iraq—from the Iraq Study Group, from the electorate and from the daily disasters in Iraq itself—we should note one institution that has not been given its due about being right all along: the independent press, including progressive Web sites and blogs. From the moment Bush's chief of staff Andrew Card announced in

September 2002 the roll-out of their "new product"—the plan to invade Iraq—the independent press relentlessly and continuously exposed the ridiculous rationales and outright lies proffered by the administration.

Remember, we were "crazy leftists" who were accused of being "with the terrorists." Turns out we also were with "reality." Let's review a tiny sample of these predictions, and celebrate outlets with not even a "liberal bias" but a progressive one, which, it turns out, was the smart and correct worldview. Also note this wasn't Monday morning quarterbacking but, like, really early pre-season quarterbacking. The following were all written months before the invasion even started.

In "The Case Against War," in the September 30, 2002, *Nation*, Stephen Zunes noted that "The Bush Administration has failed to produce credible evidence that the Iraqi regime has any links whatsoever with Al Qaeda" and foresaw "the prospect of a devastating war." He continued, "U.S. soldiers would have to fight their way through heavily populated agricultural and urban lands" and would likely face "bitter, house-to-house fighting" resulting in "high civilian casualties." (Figures vary wildly here, with estimates ranging from 50,000 to 655,000; high numbers either way.) In addition, "It would be a mistake ... to think that defeating Iraq would result in as few American casualties as occurred in driving the Taliban militia from Kabul last autumn." More to the point, "Regime change imposed by invading U.S. military forces would not be welcome" and "would only raise animosity in the region against the United States." In what one would have thought a self-evident point (though clearly not to Rumsfeld), Zunes opined "throwing a government out is easier than putting a new one together." And finally, while Zunes doubted Bush's assertions about Iraq possessing WMDs, he noted quite presciently, "in the chaos of a U.S. invasion and its aftermath, the chances of such weapons be-

ing smuggled out of the country into the hands of terrorists would increase." What he couldn't predict was that caches of various conventional weapons, including those made right here, would find their way into the hands of an insurgency.

David Cortright, writing in the August 2002 *Progressive*, predicted that "Removing the present regime and installing a pro-American government will require the invasion and occupation of Iraq by a substantial number of U.S. ground forces," upwards of 300,000. He anticipated that such an invasion would produce "significant" U.S. and Iraqi casualties, evoke "political rage" in the Arab world and "destabilize governments in the region and increase turmoil and political extremism throughout the Middle East and beyond."

And how's this for prophetic? "However much Iraqis loathe their regime, they will soon loathe the American oc-

cupation that will follow its demise." Furthermore, wrote Rashid Khalidi in the January 27, 2003, *In These Times*, "[i]t is highly questionable whether the occupation of a complex, divided country like Iraq and the installation of a new regime

will lead to a rapid flowering of democracy...this war will mark not the end, but the beginning of our problems in this region." Khalidi used the words "bloodbath" and emergence of a "regional power vacuum," warning "we will be creating legions of new enemies throughout the Middle East."

How much would the war cost? David Corn, in a September 27, 2002, post on AlterNet, challenged the Pentagon's reported projection of \$50 billion and reminded readers that Lawrence Lindsey, Bush's chief economic adviser, had said the cost could be as high as \$200 billion. Corn also noted that some of the projections included nothing for "peace-keeping or occupation forces that might be required after the war." Total cost of the war so far? Somewhere between \$349 and \$379 billion.

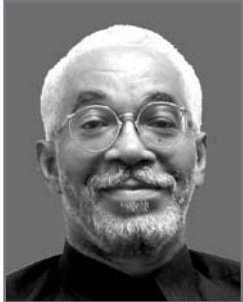
By February 2003, the independent press had repeatedly sought, in vain, to correct the Bush propaganda reiterated in his now infamous State of the Union address: that there were ties between al-Qaeda and Saddam and that those aluminum tubes (remember those?) were evidence of Iraq's flourishing nuclear arms program.

Frank Rich, in his excellent *The Greatest Story Ever Sold*, includes a timeline showing the disjuncture between fact and propaganda, and when the facts were reported by outlets like *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair* and even the *Times*. We need a comparable account about the reporting and analysis of the lead-up to and execution of the war in the "crazy leftist" press. It was crazy, alright—crazy like a fox. ■

Remember, we were 'crazy leftists' who were accused of being 'with the terrorists.' Turns out we were also with 'reality.'

BY SALIM MUWAKKIL

The Caracas Consensus



HUGO CHÁVEZ'S LANDSLIDE reelection on December 3 reinforced Latin America's status as the primary outpost of opposition to the neoliberal economic policies pushed by the West—the so-called Washington consensus (See “What Chávez's Re-election Means,” p. 26). Perhaps just as important, Chávez's win also energizes the global movement of South-South integration that has been picking up steam in recent years.

In his December 4 victory speech, Chávez made it clear that he intends to press his case. “Today we gave another lesson in dignity to the imperialists; it is another defeat for the empire of Mr. Danger . . . another defeat for the devil. We will never be a colony of the U.S. again.”

The labels “Mr. Danger” and “the devil” are Chávez's jibing references to President George W. Bush and American dominance in general. While he deploys those epithets with a touch of humor, Chávez is deadly serious about his op-

position to what he calls U.S. imperialism. His re-election gives him at least six more years to rally this opposition.

More than any other South American leader, Chávez stresses his continent's link to Africa. Addressing the World Social Forum in Caracas last January, he said, “We [Latin Americans] carry Africa inside us. Africa is part of us. Latin, Caribbean America cannot be understood without Africa and the sacrifice of Africa and the grandeur of Africa.”

Since Chávez's initial election in 1998, he has pushed to strengthen economic and cultural ties between the two continents. In the last two years, Venezuela has doubled its number of embassies in Africa and Chávez has personally visited several countries in recent months, firming up links long ignored or even nonexistent.

While attending the seventh African Union (AU) summit last July in the Gambia, for example, Chávez proposed an ambitious plan to deepen cooperation among the people of South America, Africa and the Caribbean.

Among his ideas were plans to develop an alternative energy system, called Petrosouth, to harness the power of oil as an instrument of social development. “It was used by the colonialists to oppress us,” Chávez told the summit crowd. “We are now going to use it to liberate our people.” He outlined similar ideas for alternative banking and communications institutions to replace exploitative western models.

Despite considerable opposition from the United States,

Chávez's strong push for South-South integration has also gained some traction among fellow Latin Americans. This movement is the latest iteration of the non-aligned movement organized at the 1955 Bandung Conference to mark a political space between the capitalist “West” and the socialist “East” (a division now referred to in terms of “North” and “South”).

Just days prior to the Venezuelan election, a gathering of leaders met from November 30 to December 1 at the first Africa-South America summit in Abuja, Nigeria, to begin plans for expanding bi-regional links. The unprecedented gathering included 12 South American nations and more than 50 African countries. During the summit, leaders from the two continents agreed that their common experiences as victims of western exploitation gave them a special incentive to challenge western hegemony. The meeting closed

with a plan for action and the “Resolution of Abuja,” which established a Cooperation Forum, provisionally based in Nigeria, to meet every two years to share initiatives and maintain continuity. The second conference is scheduled for Caracas in 2009.

Chávez also has offered aid and expertise to Angola's fossil fuel industry, sub-Saharan Africa's second largest. The Venezuelan president's theme of “resource nationalism”—in which producing nations are more fairly compensated for their resources—is one that goes over well on the resource-rich African continent.

But Chávez's embrace of Africa seems to go even further than a quest for South-South integration. More than any other Latin American leader in history, he seems eager to note his personal connections as well. In Mali last July, where he promised to aid in oil prospecting and drilling, Chávez told a local crowd that his father was as black as their president Amadou Toumani Touré was. And he is elevating that personal link to the level of policy.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Chávez provided relief assistance to the mostly African-American victims through CITGO, the U.S. subsidiary of Venezuela's state owned oil company. During Chávez's visit to the UN this summer, he visited African-American and Latino neighborhoods in the South Bronx and has cultivated ties with many in the civil rights community.

The fiery Venezuelan president is charting a new course for his oil-rich nation. Preaching socialism in a neoliberal world and touting African pride in a continent debilitated by disease, war and poverty would seem to be losing propositions. But we've learned not to count Chávez out. ■

Chávez's win energizes the global movement of South-South integration that has been picking up steam in recent years.

BY H. CANDACE GORMAN

Diary of a Guantánamo Attorney



I FELL INTO THE world of Guantánamo in October 2005. The Chicago Council of Lawyers had organized a luncheon discussion on the legal issues surrounding the infamous detention facility at the U.S. naval base in eastern Cuba. I received an e-mail thanking me for my attendance (I should have gone but didn't) and asking for volunteers to represent the nearly 200 known unrepresented prisoners at the base.

I had assumed that I was well-informed about our criminal president and his assault on the rule of law; it never occurred to me that four years after being captured (and more than one year after the Supreme Court affirmed their right to hearing and counsel) individuals were still being held without legal representation. I replied to the e-mail, offering my services.

During a conference call for volunteer lawyers, I got a sense of what the job might entail. For example, attorneys are required to turn their client notes over to the government after visiting prisoners. I naively asked, "What about attorney-client privilege?" This, like so many other protections and legal principles, doesn't apply to Guantánamo. Attorneys often return from the base with urgent news, but have to wait weeks for the government to clear their notes. The government rarely, if ever, classifies the content; this procedure simply delays and encumbers our work.

At a workshop for volunteer lawyers organized by the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), I came to learn of the horrific particulars of prisoner life in Guantánamo: the hunger strikes, the suicide attempts and the dubious circumstances under which prisoners had been captured. The vast majority of Guantánamo's inmates were apprehended in Afghanistan and elsewhere by third party forces, after the United States promised enormous bounties for "murderers and terrorists."

That December, I was assigned a detainee by CCR; his name was Abdul Al-Ghizzawi, a Libyan who had been living in Afghanistan before his capture. Another prisoner had written a letter identifying Al-Ghizzawi as someone who desired an attorney. Because the government would not release the names of detainees, prisoners often reached lawyers through such indirect means. I got to work preparing a petition for a writ of habeas corpus—a petition that challenges the legality of a prisoner's detention and requests that the court order the authorities to either release the individual or justify his imprisonment with formal charges.

It has been a year since I filed the petition, and Al-Ghizzawi is still languishing in Guantánamo. Initially, the government did everything possible to delay and obstruct access to my client. I knew only that my client was ill, that he wanted an attorney and that the government opposed entering the protective order that would allow me to visit and communicate with him.

Shortly after I filed the habeas petition, in a false gesture of munificence, the government invited my input into the Justice Department's review of Al-Ghizzawi's status. What could I possibly say? As I wrote the review board, "Without knowing the reasons for Mr. Al-Ghizzawi's detention, it is impossible to address those reasons or the factual basis for continuing to detain him." I added that I would supplement the submission once I had had a chance to meet and interview him.

Eventually, after what then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld would call a "long hard slog," the protective order was entered. In July, eight months after filing the habeas petition, I was finally allowed to

go to Guantánamo and meet with my client, a sick and visibly jaundiced man who pined for his wife and young daughter.

Al-Ghizzawi was a shopkeeper who sold bread, honey and other goods in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. When the American bombs started falling, he took his wife and daughter to the village where his in-laws lived. He then became one of those unlucky foreigners captured and turned in for a bounty. According to the Bush administration, all of the detainees were apprehended "on the battlefield"—in this case, the quiet home of Al-Ghizzawi's in-laws.

My ultimate aim is to release Al-Ghizzawi and reunite him with his family. However, my immediate goal is to keep him alive. The medical staff at Guantánamo have diagnosed Al-Ghizzawi with tuberculosis and hepatitis B but failed to inform or treat him for either condition. I have been fighting for access to Al-Ghizzawi's medical records, but a D.C. district judge ruled that we had not demonstrated that he would suffer "irreparable harm" in being denied his records. Imagine, I need his records in order to prove that he will suffer "irreparable harm," but cannot access them without first proving "irreparable harm." (I have appealed that ruling.)

This is just one example. As I will relate in this space in the coming months, there is no rhyme or reason to the world of Guantánamo—only a cruel inhumanity. ■

H. CANDACE GORMAN is a civil rights attorney in Chicago. Adrian Bleifuss Prados, her law clerk, contributed to this column.

Attorneys often return from the base with urgent news, but have to wait weeks for the government to clear their notes.

BY LAURA S. WASHINGTON

Art Basel Miami Beach: A Whitewash



MIAMI BEACH—SINCE 2001, Samuel Keller, the aging arts wunderkind, has inspired the art world's most seminal and explosive art exposition, Art Basel Miami Beach. What's more, the Swiss-born arts impresario seems to have cloned himself and is replicating at an alarming rate.

Miami's sunny landscape is already resplendent with lush palms, stylized Deco palaces, pastels and pelicans.

Now it is host to ubiquitous arts aficionados, all sporting the Keller look—stylishly understated, bare-pated and European. Basketball phenom Michael Jordan validated baldness for black men. Now Keller has creatively flipped that script for the white male. At Basel, bald is beautiful.

Still, much remains to be done. I have been covering the festival since it launched five years ago. Lamentably, in all that time, Keller and crew have inspired scarce participation from people of color.

Arts Basel Miami Beach is the American sister to the 37-year-old fair held every June in Basel, Switzerland. The inaugural Miami event had to be cancelled in the wake of 9/11. That didn't prevent some hardy souls from organizing a flutter of alternative exhibitions at hotels and public spaces that solemn December, and it took off from there with a vengeance. After all, the combination of South Beach sun and a December date is a no-brainer.

In the 80-degree sunshine, Art Basel Miami Beach has morphed big time. At the December 6 opening press conference, Norman Braman, a BMW dealer and longtime sponsor of the show, dubbed it the "Super Bowl of all art fairs" and "the most spectacular art extravaganza that has ever been seen."

Hyperbole aside, the thing is BIG. It's outgrown its European mama and become the "it" girl of the arts world.

As *Miami New Times* predicted, in a "market hotter than Vegas asphalt in August," Art Basel 2006 responded with a record-breaking attendance of 40,000 art lovers and professionals from around the world. Hundreds of galleries and artists converged on Miami Beach from North America, Latin America, Europe, South Africa and Asia, presenting paintings, drawings, sculpture, installations, photography, film—the works.

You would think you could find a bit of racial and ethnic diversity, especially in South Florida, America's gateway to Latin America. As I trolled through the exhibits at the

Miami Beach Convention Center, I found faces of color in short supply. While the organizers perennially pay a lot of lip service to cultural diversity, not much has changed since last year when I queried Keller about the lack of diversity.

I asked: "How many of the gallery owners and artworks are represented by people of color?" He hedged. I pressed the question. "I'm not into statistics," he said. "I can't tell you how many Swiss are here."

Why should he care? Because participation in the arts must be universal and inclusive. The arts say much about who we are. America is well on its way to becoming a majority-minority nation, and its biggest arts confab should stir that stew.

Donald Young, the established Chicago-based dealer, had a different take. "It's not a question of saying, 'that's a good

African American artist.' I think we are at the point now of saying, 'that's a great work of art.' We are past the political correctness of including African Americans because they are African American. Art should really be about who is the best."

There is certainly no shortage of talented black artists. Young was there showing Martin Puryear, the African-American superstar sculptor. Puryear, by the way, will mount a one-man show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City in 2007. You can't beat that with a stick.

The enigmatic Kara Walker was represented by Sikkema Jenkins & Co. of New York. The African-American artist unveiled a wrenching series of black and white paper cutouts that sound a cacophony of racial and sexual mayhem. Her subjects were raped, beheaded, lynched and shackled. The piece was gobbled up on the first night by an avaricious collector who paid \$400,000, according to gallery owner Michael Jenkins.

The artist Joe Tilson was "seriously involved in the cooperative, anti-authoritarian politics of the late '60s," according to Waddington Gallery of London. It was showing his series of screenprints and oil on canvas on wood relief. The provocative pieces starkly highlight the political and psychic distance between Malcolm X and Barack Obama.

"Muhammad Speaks" and "Black Dwarf," produced in 1969, evoked the stirring days of black radicalism. The asking price for "Dwarf" was \$170,000. Indeed, the price of anti-authoritarianism has gone up. Life must be good for this old lefty.

Here's the bald truth: The fair feigned an interest in inclusiveness, but the David of artistic creativity was dwarfed by the Goliath of global commerce. ■

You would think you could find a bit of racial and ethnic diversity, especially in South Florida, America's gateway to Latin America.

THE FIRST STONE

BY JOEL BLEIFUSS

Voting Problems? In Florida? No Way!



FOLLOWING THE 2000 election a popular bumper sticker in Florida read, "If you think we can't vote, wait 'til you see us drive." But nobody's laughing now.

Unless the Democratic-controlled House votes to hold a new election, Republican Vern Buchanan will represent Florida's 13th congressional district in the 110th Congress. Buchanan "won" election by beating Democrat Christine Jennings by 369 votes out of 237, 861 cast.

The election was held on direct-recording electronic (DRE) voting machines that don't leave a paper trail. Strangely, according to the machine count, 18,382 voters in Democratic Sarasota County did not bother to cast a ballot in the congressional race (that's 15 percent of those who voted in the county on November 7). That is unlikely, since it was a hotly contested battle for the seat vacated by former Secretary of State Katherine Harris, who ran for Senate and was soundly defeated. (Yes, Al, there is a God.)

All evidence points to voting machine malfunction. If those 18,382 votes had gone to Jennings by the same percentage with which she carried Sarasota County, 53 percent, she would have won the election by 600 votes.

The machines in question are iVotronic DRE touch-screens manufactured by Election Systems & Software (ES&S). According to a *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* survey of election workers, one in three reported that they had received complaints from voters who said their votes did not register. And more than 100 voters have told Jennings' campaign that, after voting on the iVotronic touch screen machines, their votes for Jennings did not show up on the sum-

mary displayed at the end of the voting process.

A recount was conducted, but little changed, which is only natural. One can't really recount votes cast on DRE voting machines—one can only re-run the vote-counting program that caused the problem in the first place. Nevertheless, Gov. Jeb Bush, a champion of electronic voting, certified the recount and promised that the Sarasota machines would be audited—by Alec Yasinac, a Florida State University professor who during the 2000 election imbroglio held vigil on the steps of the Florida Supreme Court wearing a "Bush Won" button.

It is up to the Democratic leadership in the House to decide whether or not to call for a re-vote. MoveOn.org has organized a national petition drive aimed at Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Short and sweet, the petition reads, "In the wake of Florida's electronic voting machine meltdown, Congress should call for a re-vote and repair our nation's elections."

Florida Republicans, skilled in the art of stealing elections, have geared up for battle. Miami Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart told the *St. Petersburg Times*, "If that happens ... forget about any possibility of pretending to be civil. That would be an affront to democracy."

The 2006 Exit Poll Discrepancy

WITH A COUPLE of notable exceptions the 2006 mid-term elections were not fraught with the problems that were endemic in 2004.

Unlike 2004, in 2006 there was no glitch in the CNN computer system, so we don't have access to the unadjusted results of the exit poll that was conducted for ABC, CBS, CNN,

NBC, Fox and AP. And unlike 2004, the two firms conducting the exit polls, Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International, waited until 5 p.m. EST to release their exit polls to their media clients.

However, after 5 p.m. EST someone at CNN did leak some of the exit poll results for 10 Senate races to ThinkProgress, the blog of the Center for American Progress in Washington.

In two key races for the Senate, the exit polls indicated election results that diverged significantly from the official results.

In Montana, the exit polls indicated that Jon Tester would win 53 percent of the vote to Conrad Burns 46 percent. However in the official count Tester eked out a 49 percent to 48 percent victory over Burns. In other words, there was a 6-percent-age point discrepancy between the exit polls and the official count.

In Virginia, the exit polls indicated that Democrat Jim Webb would beat Republican incumbent George Allen, 52 percent to 47 percent. However, in the official count, Webb and Allen were virtually tied, with Webb getting 49.59 percent of the votes and Allen 49.20 percent of the votes (a difference of 9,329 votes). In other words, there was a 5-percentage point discrepancy between the exit polls and the official count.

As Steven Freeman and I explain in our book *Was the 2004 Presidential Election Stolen? Exit Polls, Election Fraud and the Official Count*, in 2004 a similar pattern occurred. The 2004 Election Day exit polls showed Kerry did better than the official count indicated in the key 11 battleground states, but most significantly in Nevada, New Mexico and Ohio.

As in 2004, in 2006 the discrepancy between the exit poll results and the official count in Montana and Virginia raise questions about the integrity of



If it weren't for Katherine Harris, where would George W. Bush be now?

the voting processes in both states.

This is particularly true because, in almost all other cases, the 2006 exit polls were on the money. For example, in the hotly contested Missouri race, the exit polls indicated that Democrat Claire McCaskill would beat the Republican incumbent Jim Talent 50 percent to 48 percent and the official vote total was 50 to 47. And in Tennessee, the exit polls predicted that Harold Ford would lose to Republican Bob Corker 48 to 51 percent, and the official vote total was 48 to 51 percent. These results indicate that the pollsters' polling methodology was on the mark. So why were the discrepancies in Montana and Virginia so large? Did voting machines malfunction?

If we had access to the precinct-level exit poll data from Montana and Virginia, which the pollsters have withheld, we would be able to investigate whether the size of the exit poll discrepancy correlates with the voting technology used in specific precincts.

TAKE MONTANA: IN the Big Sky State, 16 counties used paper ballots and 40 counties use optical scan voting systems manufactured by ES&S, one of

the three largest voting machine companies. If we had access to the exit poll data, we would be able to compare the size of the discrepancy in the precincts in the 16 counties where Montana voters cast paper ballots with those precincts in the 40 counties where voters used ES&S optical scan machines.

The 2004 exit poll data indicated that in rural and small-town precincts—the only precincts for which the exit pollsters released data that could be meaningfully compared—the difference between the exit poll results and the official count was three times greater in precincts where voters used machines than in precincts where voters voted on paper ballots. In other words, in precincts that used paper ballots there was no discrepancy between the exit polls and the official count. It would be interesting—and if we had the data, very possible—to know whether or not that was the case in Montana.

Unlike the voting systems manufactured by competitors Sequoia and Diebold, ES&S optical scan machines have not been publicly hacked. However a study by the Brennan Center for Justice released in October found:

All of the most commonly purchased electronic voting systems [including ES&S optical scan systems] have significant security and reliability vulnerabilities, which pose a real danger to the integrity of national, state, and local elections. ... The Brennan Center's Task Force on Voting System Security reviewed more than 120 potential threats to voting systems. Among its key conclusions was the finding that attacks involving the insertion of software attack programs or other corrupt software are the least difficult attacks against all electronic systems currently being purchased, when the goal is to change the outcome of a close statewide election.

IN VIRGINIA, THE situation is less clear. The 95 counties in Virginia use 17 mechanical voting systems manufactured by seven different voting machine companies, most of which are some form of DRE electronic voting systems that leave no paper trail.

Lest their be any doubt about the dangers of electronic voting, in November the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), a federal agency, issued a draft report that noted:

The computer security community rejects the notion that DREs can be made secure, arguing that their design is inadequate to meet the requirements of voting and that they are vulnerable to large-scale errors and election fraud.

And NIST concluded, "Software dependent approaches such as the DRE are not viable for future voting systems."

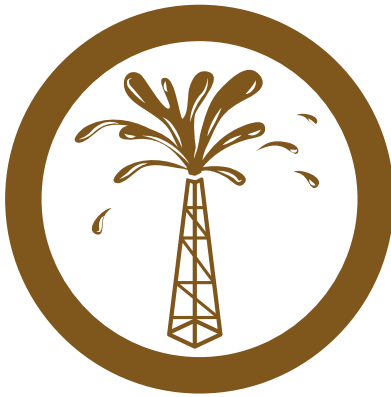
The 5-percentage point discrepancy between the exit polls and the official count in Virginia indicate that vote fraud is a plausible possibility. Yes Democrat Webb won, but if the election for the Virginia Senate seat was hacked, that would have involved a pre-programmed electronic transfer of votes from one candidate to another—all of which would have been done so as to not to raise suspicion by interfering with the total number of votes cast. That raises the question: Did Webb win because GOP operatives didn't program the electronic voting systems to steal enough votes?

We can only speculate. This, however, is certain: A thorough examination of the precinct-level exit poll data and the voting technologies used in those precincts where the exit polls were conducted could lay help lay such questions to rest once and for all. ■

BY ANTONIA JUHASZ

SPOILS OF WAR

Oil, the U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Area and the Bush Agenda



REMEMBER OIL? THAT THING we *didn't* go to war in Iraq for? Now with his war under attack, even President George W. Bush has gone public, telling reporters last August, “[a] failed Iraq ... would give the terrorists and extremists an additional tool besides safe haven, and that is revenues from oil sales.” Of course, Bush not only wants to keep oil out of his enemies’ hands, he also wants to put it into the hands of his friends.

The President’s concern over Iraq’s oil is shared by the Iraq Study Group, which on December 6 released its much-anticipated report. While the mainstream press focused on the report’s criticism of Bush’s handling of the war and the report’s call for (potential) removal of (most) U.S. troops (maybe) by 2008, ignored was the report’s focus on Iraq’s oil. Page 1, chapter 1 laid out in no uncertain terms Iraq’s importance to the Middle East, the United States and the world with this reminder: “It has the world’s second-largest known oil reserves.” The group then proceeds to give very specific and radical recommendations as to what should be done to secure those reserves.

Guaranteeing access to Iraq’s oil, however isn’t the whole story. Despite the lives lost and the utter ruin that the war has brought, the overarching economic agenda that the administration is successfully pursuing in the Middle East might be the most enduring legacy of the war—and the most ignored.

Just two months after declaring “mission accomplished” in Iraq, Bush announced his plans for a U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Area to spread the economic invasion well-underway in Iraq to the rest of the region by 2013. Negotiations have progressed rapidly as countries seek to prove that they are with the United States, not against it.

The Bush Agenda

Within days of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, then-U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick announced that the Bush administration would be “countering terror with trade.” Bush reiterated that pledge four years later when he told the United Nations, “By expanding trade, we spread hope and opportunity to the corners of the world, and we strike a blow against the terrorists. Our agenda for freer trade is part of our agenda for a freer world.” In the case of the March 2003 invasion and ongoing occupation of Iraq, these “free trade”—or corporate globalization—policies have been applied in tandem with America’s military forces.

The Bush administration used the military invasion of Iraq to oust its leader, replace its government, implement new economic and political laws, and write a new constitution. The new economic laws have transformed Iraq’s economy, applying some of the most radical—and sought-after—corporate globalization policies in the world and locking in sweeping advantages to U.S. corporations. Through the ongoing occupation, the Bush administration seeks to ensure that both Iraq’s new government and this new economic structure stay firmly in place. The ultimate goal—opening Iraq to U.S. oil companies—is reaching fruition.

In 2004, Michael Scheuer—the CIA’s senior expert on al-Qaeda until he quit in disgust with the Bush administration—wrote, “The U.S. invasion of Iraq was not preemption; it was ... an avaricious, premeditated, unprovoked war against a foe who posed no immediate threat but whose defeat did offer economic advantages.”

How right he was. For it is an absolute fallacy that the Bush administration had no post-invasion plan for Iraq. The administration had a very clear economic plan that has contributed significantly to the disastrous results of the war. The plan was

prepared at least two months prior to the war by the U.S. consultancy firm, Bearing Point, Inc., which then received a \$250 million contract to remake Iraq's economic infrastructure.

L. Paul Bremer III—the head of the U.S. occupation government of Iraq, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA)—followed Bearing Point's plan to the letter. From May 6, 2003 until June 28, 2004, Bremer implemented his "100 Orders" with the force of law, all but a handful of which remain in place today.

Once U.S. oil companies get their lucrative contracts, they will still need protection to get to work. What better security force is there than 144,000 American troops?

As the preamble to many of the orders state, they are intended to "transition [Iraq] from a ... centrally planned economy to a market economy" virtually overnight and by U.S. fiat.

Bremer's orders included firing the entire Iraqi military—some half a million men—in the first weeks of the occupation. Suddenly jobless, many of these men took their guns with them and joined the violent insurgency. Bremer also fired 120,000 of Iraq's senior bureaucrats from every government ministry, hospital and school. His laws allowed for the privatization of Iraq's state-owned enterprises (excluding oil) and for American companies to receive preferential treatment over Iraqis in the awarding of reconstruction contracts. The laws reduced taxes on all corporations by 25 percent and opened every sector of the Iraqi economy to private foreign investment. The laws allowed foreign firms to own 100 percent of Iraqi businesses (as opposed to partnering with Iraqi firms) and to send their profits home without having to invest a cent in the struggling Iraqi economy. Iraqi laws governing banking, foreign investment, patents, copyrights, business ownership, taxes, the media, agriculture and trade were all changed to conform to U.S. goals.

After the U.S. corporate invasion of Iraq

More than 150 U.S. companies were awarded contracts for post-war work totaling more than \$50 billion.

The American companies were hired, even though Iraqi companies had successfully rebuilt the country after the previous U.S. invasion. And, because the American companies did not have to hire Iraqis, many imported foreign workers instead. The Iraqis were, of course, well aware that American firms had received billions of dollars for reconstruction, that Iraqi companies and workers had been rejected and that the country was still without basic services. The result: increasing hostility, acts of sabotage targeted directly at foreign contractors and their work, and a rising insurgency.

Halliburton received the largest contract, worth more than \$12 billion, while 13 other U.S. companies received contracts worth more than \$1.5 billion each. The seven largest reconstruction contracts went to the Parsons Corporation of Pasadena, Calif. (\$5.3 billion); Fluor Corporation of Aliso Viejo, Calif. (\$3.75 billion); Washington Group International of Boise, Idaho (\$3.1 billion); Shaw Group of Baton Rouge, La. (\$3 billion); Bechtel Corpora-

tion of San Francisco (\$2.8 billion); Perini Corporation of Framingham, Mass. (\$2.5 billion); and Contrack International, Inc. of Arlington, Va. (\$2.3 billion). These companies are responsible for virtually all reconstruction in Iraq, including water, bridges, roads, hospitals, and sewers and, most significantly, electricity.

U.S. Air Force Colonel Sam Gardiner, author of a 2002 U.S. government study on the likely effect that U.S. bombardment would have on Iraq's power system, said, "frankly, if we had just given

the Iraqis some baling wire and a little bit of space to keep things running, it would have been better. But instead we've let big U.S. companies go in with plans for major overhauls."

Many companies had their sights set on years-long privatization in Iraq, which helps explain their interest in "major overhauls" rather than getting the systems up and running. Cliff Mumm, head of Bechtel's Iraq operation, put it this way: "[Iraq] has two rivers, it's fertile, it's sitting on an ocean of oil. Iraq ought to be a major player in the world. And we want to be working for them long term."

And, since many U.S. contracts guaranteed that all of the companies' costs would be covered, plus a set rate of profit (known as cost-plus contracts), they took their time, building expensive new facilities that showcased their skills and would serve their own needs should they be running the systems one day.

Mismanagement, waste, abuse and criminality have also characterized U.S. corporations in Iraq—leading to a series of U.S. contract cancellations. For example, a \$243 million contract held by the Parsons Corporation for the construction of 150 health care centers was cancelled after more than two years of work and \$186 million yielded just six centers, only two of which are serving patients. Parsons was also dropped from two different contracts to build prisons, one in Mosul and the other in Nasiriyah. The Bechtel Corporation was dropped from a \$50 million contract for the construction of a children's hospital in Basra after it went \$90 million over budget and a year-and-a-half behind schedule. These contracts have since been turned over to Iraqi companies.

Halliburton's subsidiary KBR is currently being investigated by government agencies and facing dozens of charges for waste, fraud and abuse. Most significantly, in 2006, the U.S. Army cancelled Halliburton's largest government contract, the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP), which was for worldwide logistical support to U.S. troops. Halliburton will continue its current Iraq contract, but this year the LOGCAP will be broken into smaller parts and competitively bid out to other companies.

The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), a congressionally-mandated independent auditing and oversight body, has opened 256 investigations into criminal fraud, four of which have resulted in convictions. SIGIR has provided critical oversight of the U.S. reconstruction, but this fall it nearly fell prey to a GOP attempt to shut down its activi-



At the signing of the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement on September 26, President Bush congratulates Oman's ambassador, Hunaina bint Sultan Al-Mughairy, for granting U.S. oil companies unfettered access to the emirate's oil wealth.

ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

ties well ahead of schedule. Fortunately, it survived.

SIGIR's October 2006 report to Congress reveals the failure of U.S. corporations in Iraq. In the electricity sector, less than half of all planned projects in Iraq have been completed, while 21 percent have yet to even begin. Even the term "complete" can be misleading as, for example, SIGIR has found that contractors have failed to build transmission and distribution lines to connect new generators to homes and businesses. Thus, nationally, Iraqis have on average just 11 hours of electricity a day, and in Baghdad, the heart of instability in Iraq, there are between four and eight hours on average per day. Before the war, Baghdad averaged 24 hours per day of electricity.

While there has been greater success in finishing water and sewage projects, the fact that 80 percent of potable water projects are reported complete does little good if there is no electricity to pump the water into homes, hospitals or businesses. Meanwhile, the health care sector is truly a tragedy. Just 36 percent of planned projects are reported as complete. Of 20 planned hospitals, 12 are finished and only six of 150 planned public health centers are serving patients today.

Overall, the economy is languishing, with high inflation, low growth, and unemployment rates estimated at 30 to 50 percent for the nation and as high as 70

percent in some areas. The International Monetary Fund has enforced a structural adjustment program on Iraq that mirrors much of Bush's corporate globalization agenda, and the administration continues to push for Iraq's admission into the World Trade Organization.

Iraq has not, therefore, emerged as the wealthy free market haven that Bush & Co. had hoped for. Several U.S. companies are now preparing to pack up, head home and take their billions of dollars with them, their work in Iraq left undone.

The Bush administration is likely to follow a dual strategy: continuing to pursue a corporate free-trade haven in Iraq, while helping U.S. corporations extricate themselves without consequence. The administration will also focus on the big prize: Iraq's oil.

Winning Iraq's oil prize

The Bush Agenda does have supporters, especially those corporate allies that have both shaped and benefited from the administration's economic and military policies.

In the 2000 election cycle, the oil and gas industry donated 13 times more money to Bush's campaign than to Al Gore's. The Bush administration is the first in history in which the president, vice president and secretary of state are all former energy company officials. In fact, the only other U.S. president to come from the oil

and gas industry was Bush's father. Moreover, both George W. Bush and Condoleezza Rice have more experience running oil companies than they do working for the government.

Planning to secure Iraq's oil for U.S. companies began on the tenth day of the Bush presidency, when Vice President Dick Cheney established the National Energy Policy Development Group—widely referred to as "Cheney's Energy Task Force." It produced two lists, titled "Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield Contracts as of 5 March 2001," which named more than 60 companies from some 30 countries with contracts for oil and gas projects across Iraq—none of which were with American firms. However, because sanctions were imposed on Iraq at this time, none of the contracts could come into force. If the sanctions were removed—which was becoming increasingly likely as public opinion turned against the sanctions and Hussein remained in power—the contracts would go to all of those foreign oil companies and the U.S. oil industry would be shut out.

As the Bush administration stepped up its war planning, the State Department began preparations for post-invasion Iraq. Meeting four times between December 2002 and April 2003, members of the State Department's Oil and Energy Working Group mapped out Iraq's oil future. They agreed that Iraq "should be opened to international oil companies as quickly as possible after the war" and that the best method for doing so was through Production Sharing Agreements (PSAs).

PSAs are considered "privatization lite" in the oil business and, as such, are the favorite of international oil companies and the worst-case scenario for oil-rich states. With PSAs, oil ownership ultimately rests with the government, but the most profitable aspects of the industry—exploration and production—are contracted to the private companies under highly favorable terms. None of the top oil producers in the Middle East use PSAs, because they favor private companies at the expense of the exporting governments. In fact, PSAs are only used in respect to about 12 percent of world oil reserves.

After the invasion

Two months after the invasion of Iraq, in May 2003, the U.S.-appointed senior adviser to the Iraqi Oil Ministry, Thamer al-Ghadban, announced that the new

Iraqi government would honor few, if any, of the dozens of contracts signed with foreign oil companies under the Hussein regime.

At the same time, Bremer was laying the economic groundwork for a "U.S. corporate friendly" Iraq. When Bremer left Iraq in June 2004, he bequeathed the Bush economic agenda to two men, Ayad Allawi and Adel Abdul Mahdi, who Bremer appointed interim Prime Minister and Finance Minister, respectively. Two months later, Allawi (a former CIA asset) submitted guidelines for a new petroleum law to Iraq's Supreme Council for Oil Policy. The guidelines declared "an end to the centrally planned and state dominated Iraqi economy" and advised the "Iraqi government to disengage from running the oil sector, including management of the planned Iraq National Oil Company (INOC), and that the INOC be partly privatized in the future."

Allawi's guidelines also turned all undeveloped oil and gas fields over to private international oil companies. Because only 17 of Iraq's 80 known oil fields have been developed, Allawi's proposal would put 64 percent of Iraq's oil into the hands

of foreign firms. However, if a further 100 billion barrels are discovered, as is widely predicted, foreign companies could control 81 percent of Iraq's oil—or 87 percent if, as the Oil Ministry predicts, 200 billion barrels are found.

On December 21, 2004, Mahdi joined U.S. Undersecretary of State Alan Larson at the National Press Club and announced Iraq's plans for a new petroleum law that would open the oil sector to private foreign investment.

"I think this is very promising to the American investors and to American enterprise, certainly to oil companies," said Mahdi. He described how, under the proposed law, foreign companies would gain access both to "downstream" and "maybe even upstream" oil investment in Iraq. ("Downstream" refers to refining, distribution, and marketing of oil. "Upstream" refers to exploration and production.)

The draft petroleum law adopted Allawi's recommendation that currently producing oil fields are to be developed by Iraq's National Oil Company, while all new fields are opened to private companies using PSAs.

The Bush administration and U.S. oil

companies have maintained constant pressure on Iraq to pass the petroleum law. The administration appointed an advisor to the Iraqi government from Bearing Point to support completion of the law. And in July 2006, U.S. Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman announced in Baghdad that oil executives told him that their companies would not enter Iraq without passage of the new oil law. *Petroleum Economist* magazine later reported that U.S. oil companies considered passage of the new oil law more important than increased security when deciding whether to go into business in Iraq.

The Iraq Study Group, recognizing as it did the primacy of oil in its Iraq calculations, recommended that the U.S. "assist Iraqi leaders to reorganize the national oil industry as a commercial enterprise" and "encourage investment in Iraq's oil sector by the international community and by international energy companies."

Put simply, U.S. oil companies want access to as much of Iraq's oil as they can get and on the best possible terms. The fact that Iraq is a war-ravaged and occupied nation works to the companies' benefit. As a result, the companies and the Bush ad-



"an obscure journal . . ."

—ALEXANDER COCKBURN

"The most useful political magazine in the United States today."

—RICHARD RORTY

Decide for yourself. Subscribe to

Dissent

Yes, I'd like a subscription to DISSENT:

☐ \$24/year ☐ \$40/two years ☐ students: \$17/year ☐ single copy: \$7.50

FOREIGN (including Canada & Mexico): ☐ \$45/year ☐ \$80/two years

☐ Check enclosed (drawn on U.S. currency).

☐ Bill me ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard ☐ Signature _____

Card No. _____ Expiration Date _____

Name _____ E-mail _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

6ITTCG

www.dissentmagazine.org
Dissent, PO Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834-3000

ministration are holding U.S. troops hostage in Iraq until they get what they want. Once the companies get their lucrative contracts, they will still need protection to get to work. What better security force is there than 144,000 American troops?

Three days after the release of the Iraq Study Group Report, the al-Maliki government announced that Iraq's oil law was near completion. The law adopts PSAs and not only opens Iraq to private foreign companies, but permits "for the first time—local and international companies to carry out oil exploration in Iraq."

To ensure that this model prevails, the Iraq Study Group recommends that Iraq's constitution be rewritten to give the central government of Iraq—as opposed to individual regions—the ultimate decision-making authority over all of Iraq's developed and undeveloped oil fields.

Standard Oil Company's John D. Rockefeller famously said, "Own nothing, control everything." He would be proud of the U.S. oil companies and the Bush administration, as they seem poised to get exactly the control they want over Iraq's oil.

Beyond Iraq: the U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Area

But the Bush agenda has never been limited to Iraq. As the *Wall Street Journal* reported in May 2003, "For many conservatives, Iraq is now the test case for whether the U.S. can engender American-style free-market capitalism within the

Arab world." To this end, the administration has used the "stick" of the Iraq war to convince nations across the Middle East to adopt its free trade agenda. The mechanism for doing so is the president's U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA).

The corporate lobbying group behind the MEFTA, the aptly named U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Coalition, includes among its 120 members Chevron, ExxonMobil, Bechtel and Halliburton—companies intimately connected to the Bush administration that have already been big winners in Iraq.

Insulated by oil revenue, the Middle East has largely avoided succumbing to the sacrifices required under free trade agreements. But since the war began, negotiations for the MEFTA have progressed rapidly.

The Bush administration devised a unique negotiating strategy for the MEFTA. Rather than negotiate with all of the nations as a bloc, the United States negotiates one-on-one with each country. This means that every nation—some half the size of one state in the United States—must try to make a deal that serves its own interests with the most economically and militarily dominant nation in the world. The reality is that there can be no "negotiation" between such thoroughly unequal pairings.

These individual free trade agreements are then united under the MEFTA. If successful, the MEFTA would be con-

cluded by 2013 and include 20 countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, Tunisia and Yemen.

To date, the Bush administration has signed 13 Trade and Investment Framework Agreements (TIFAs), which demonstrate a country's commitment to the MEFTA, and are considered the key step towards passage of a full Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Things have moved briskly since the invasion of Iraq. Algeria and Bahrain signed before the war, while agreements with Lebanon (the most recent, signed in December), Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Egypt, Morocco, Oman and Iraq all followed the war.

The United States has signed FTAs with five Middle Eastern countries: Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Bahrain, and Oman. The last three were signed after the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Negotiations with the United Arab Emirates are underway and near completion.

The winners, of course, are U.S. corporations. On January 19, 2006, for example, then-U.S. Trade Representative Robert Portman sent a letter to Oman's minister of commerce and industry affirming that, when it signs contracts, the Omani government may not give preference to the government's state-controlled oil companies.

As for Oman's apparel industry, the U.S. International Trade Commission estimates that the U.S.-Oman agreement will lead to a 66 percent increase in U.S. imports of apparel manufactured in Oman. What are the likely effects? In May, a report by the National Labor Committee detailed the cost of the first Middle East trade agreement signed by Bush in December 2001—the U.S.-Jordan FTA. After that agreement was implemented, new factories arrived in Jordan to service American companies, primarily apparel firms such as Wal-Mart, JC Penney, Target and Jones New York. These factories have engaged in the worst kinds of rights violations, including 48-hour shifts without sleep, physical and psychological abuse, and, in the case of imported foreign workers, employers who hold passports and refuse to pay. (Wal-Mart also is a member of the U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Coalition.)

The Bush administration will spend the next two years aggressively pushing the



Treat others with justice and respect. How you treat others will be how they treat you.

BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Ask for our *Making A Difference* brochure today, and find out more about our mutual funds.

Call 1-800-530-5321 or visit www.domini.com.

Domini
SOCIAL INVESTMENTS®
Investing For Good™

You should consider the Domini Funds' investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses carefully before investing. Obtain a copy of the Funds' current prospectus for complete information on these and other topics, by calling 1-800-530-5321 or online at www.domini.com. Please read it carefully before investing or sending money. DSIL Investments Services LLC, Distributor. 10/04

MEFTA as it seeks to expand the economic invasion of Iraq to the entire region.

What's next?

Throughout his presidency, George W. Bush has claimed that we will live in a safer, more prosperous, and more peaceful world if the United States remains at war and if countries throughout the world change their laws and adopt economic policies that benefit America's largest multinational corporations. The Bush Agenda has proven to have the opposite effect: increasing deadly acts of terrorism and economic insecurity, reducing freedom, and engendering more war. To replace the Bush Agenda, we must address each of its key pillars individually—war, imperialism and corporate globalization.

The most urgent first step is ending the war in Iraq by ending both the military and corporate occupations. We in the peace movement have already made tremendous progress in reaching these ends. Most Americans now oppose the war. The peace movement has welcomed with open arms U.S. soldiers and their families who share this opposition and unity has made us all stronger. Counter-recruitment efforts are blossoming across the country. The U.S. labor movement has joined forces with its counterpart in Iraq. Protests at corporate headquarters and shareholder meetings have led to U.S. war profiteers being called to account for their abuses in Iraq. Our success was made concrete with the dismissal of the president's party from power in both the House and the Senate.

According to "Election 2006: No to Staying the course on Trade," by Public Citizen, 18 House races saw "fair traders" replace "free traders" in the midterm election, and not a single "free trader" beat a fair trade candidate. In every Senate seat that changed hands, a fair trader beat a free trader. One of their most important tasks this year will be to deny Bush the renewal of Fast Track negotiating authority when it expires in July. Fast Track allows the president to move trade bills through Congress quickly by overriding core aspects of the democratic process, such as committee deliberations, full congressional debate and the ability to offer amendments.

In addition to the newcomers, several existing allies have been elevated to new positions of power. Rep. Ike Skelton (D-Mo.) is now chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. He has



An Iraqi worker tends to pipe at the Iraqi-Turkish pipeline in Kirkuk.

KARIM SAHIB/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

pledged to resurrect the subcommittee on oversight and investigations. Rep. David Obey (D-Wisc.) will use his chairmanship of the House Appropriations Committee to exercise greater oversight of Bush's war spending. The most important ally, however, will likely be Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), the new chairman of the House Government Reform Committee. Waxman has been one of the most effective and aggressive critics of Halliburton's work in Iraq, greatly contributing to Halliburton's loss of its LOGCAP contract.

Our allies in the new Congress should put forward two key demands:

First, all remaining and future U.S. reconstruction funds must be turned over to Iraqi companies and Iraqi workers. SIGIR found that when Iraqi companies receive contracts (rather than subcontracts from U.S. companies), their work is faster, less expensive and less prone to insurgent attack. There are literally hundreds of both private and public Iraqi companies—and millions of Iraqi workers—ready, able and willing to do this work. U.S. military commanders and soldiers in Iraq have repeatedly made this demand as they have learned firsthand that a person with a clipboard or a shovel in his or her hands is far less likely to carry a gun.

Second, U.S. corporations must not be allowed to "cut and run." Every U.S. corporation with reconstruction contracts

in Iraq must be individually audited and each project investigated by SIGIR. Mis-spent funds must be returned and made available to Iraqis for reconstruction. SIGIR has begun this process with plans for a full audit of Bechtel's work due out early this year. SIGIR needs more staff, greater oversight authority and more money to complete this work in a timely manner.

The Democrats must abandon the Bush administration's plan to remake Iraq into an economic wonderland for U.S. corporations. Iraq must belong to the Iraqis to remake as they see fit. Nowhere is this demand more critical than in the case of Iraq's oil.

It is clear that Iraq needs to develop its oil sector to survive and that it needs to retain as much of the proceeds from its oil as possible. It is also clear that it should be the Iraqi public—freed of the external pressure of a foreign occupation, the Bush administration and U.S. corporations—that decides how its oil is developed. U.S. oil corporations cannot be permitted to "win" the war in Iraq while we—Iraqis and Americans—pay the price for their victory. ■

ANTONIA JUHASZ, a visiting scholar at the Institute for Policy Studies, is the author of *The Bush Agenda: Invading the World, One Economy at a Time*, on which part of this article is based. She is working on a new book that will make the case for the break-up of the largest American oil companies. Learn more at www.TheBushAgenda.net.

Chávez Consolidates Power

With the opposition routed, Venezuela's "revolutionary process" seems set to accelerate

BY STEVE ELLNER

CARACAS—THE BIG NEWS ITEM coming out of Venezuela on December 3 was not President Hugo Chávez' reelection, but his wide margin of victory. With 62 percent of the vote—the largest ever for Chávez—the former coup leader is stronger than at any time during his eight years in power. Conversely, the opposition has reached an all-time low, losing in all 23 states.

The results represent a mandate for Chávez to deepen what he and his followers call the "revolutionary process." Rank-and-file members of the Chávez movement overwhelmingly call for an all-out war on corruption and a leadership shakeup within its ranks, particularly among governors, mayors and others at the local level. Chávez expressed the same spirit in his victory speech when he called for brandishing two swords, "one against corruption and the other against bureaucratization." Many of the movement's hard-liners, encouraged by Chávez's own rhetoric, argue that such a campaign goes hand-in-hand with social and economic policies producing far-reaching transformation.

Events since Chávez was first elected president in 1998 also presage important changes for 2007. Every time Chávez has emerged victorious, he has consolidated political control and taken new, bold measures. His triumphs have included the ratification of a new constitution in a national referendum in 1999, the return to power after a two-day coup in April 2002, the defeat of a two-month general strike beginning later that year and his victory in the presidential recall election in 2004. In early 2005, Chávez pushed the limits again by calling for the construction of a new "socialist" model for Venezuela, although he failed to enter into specifics.

Chávez faces a favorable international climate for radical change. Indeed, the Latin American left has never been so well positioned. Chávez's success in December continues an electoral trend in



Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez (L) hugs Bolivian President Evo Morales, during the closing ceremony of the Social Summit of the People.

favor of the Latin American left. The first happened in December 2005 in Bolivia where Chávez's friend Evo Morales received enough votes to avoid a runoff election. In mid-2006, the left's fortunes seemed to change with defeats in Peru, Colombia and Mexico. These results were interpreted by some pundits as a setback for Chávez's activist diplomacy and a sign that the left was on the retreat. However, despite the losses, leftists leapt onto the national stage in all three countries where they had long been confined to the local and state levels. Since then, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was re-elected president in Brazil, and in November Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega emerged triumphant in Nicaragua, followed by leftist Rafael Correa in Ecuador.

These developments feed into Chávez's strategy to promote a bloc of Latin American nations with objectives similar to the European Union. Chávez insists that

such a formation should exclude the United States until Latin America is able to meet it on equal terms. Venezuela's entrance into the common market known as MERCOSUR in 2006 was a step in this direction. MERCOSUR members Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay are also run by left-leaning governments. Significantly, MERCOSUR nations acted as a bloc by supporting Venezuela in its unsuccessful bid in October for a non-permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council.

AND YET, IN one sense, Chávez's electoral success is a liability. The December results reinforce the accusations of Chávez's detractors and much of the national and foreign media that the Venezuelan president has amassed excessive power. The opposition controls only two of the nation's 23 governorships and an equally small percentage of municipal governments.

But whether competitive politics flourishes largely depends on the opposition. Until now, the main parties of the opposition, including the two largest, Democratic Action (AD) and "Justice First," have acted as a "disloyal opposition." They have rejected Chávez's legitimacy and systematically opposed all his actions. AD actually boycotted the December elections.

Consequently, one of the other major news items on December 3 was opposition candidate Manuel Rosales' recognition of defeat, although he claimed without plausible evidence that he had been robbed of a significant number of votes. Two days later, Rosales admitted that the National Electoral Council's manual auditing attested to the accuracy of the official tally. At the same time, he apologized for the "past errors" of the opposition.

While the hard-liners accuse Rosales of having "sold out," opposition political analyst Tulio Hernández has argued that his immediate recognition of defeat "rids the opposition of the stigma of being pro-military coup." According to Hernández, Rosales' posture confirmed that "the majority of the opposition has always been democratic." Hernández holds Chávez responsible for promoting the notion that the opposition is anti-democratic and a "lackey of the U.S. empire."

But the opposition hasn't only been hurt by its intransigence. Its string of setbacks is also due to its failure to break with the neoliberal economic formulas of the past that Chávez has repeatedly excoriated. It continues to support policies that would downsize the state and turn over economic decisionmaking to the private sector.

The opposition's ongoing defense of neoliberalism was made clear by Rosales' main campaign offer: ATM cards for all citizens, guaranteeing them an income that would be pegged to the nation's oil revenue. The proposed handout was part of a concerted effort by opposition leaders to reach out to the poor as a corrective to their close identification with the middle class. But the justification of the proposal was wrapped in neoliberal logic and rhetoric. Rosales' campaign statement called the ATM card proposal a recognition of the failure of "the bureaucratic elites" and went on to proclaim "faith in the people and their creative capacity to administer the wealth." The statement concluded on the need for a new "state paradigm."

THROUGHOUT THE CAMPAIGN, the opposition insisted that Chávez had little to show for all of his lofty ideals and fiery rhetoric. In the latter months of the campaign, however, Chávez oversaw a series of costly and ambitious projects. His government's big push was public transportation. Ángel Ontiveros, president of the Institute of State Railroads, put it this way: "The world is looking at Venezuela because it is the only country that is investing in railways and renovating existing ones." One project completed in October links the town of Cua to Caracas, 20 miles away. Shortly thereafter, the first lines of the metros of the cities of Valencia and Maracaibo were finished. In November, Chávez and Brazilian president Lula presided over the completion of the second bridge over the Orinoco River.

But much more dramatic and far-reaching than public works are the outlines of a new model for the economy that have emerged over the past two years in Venezuela under Chávez's leadership.

While the government guarantees the rights of private property, it also demands that capitalists fulfill certain obligations. Since early 2005, the government has expropriated various companies that had closed down, turning over management to the workers. At the same time, the National Lands Institute has broken up underutilized agricultural land in accordance with a law passed in 2001. The government is currently negotiating an agreement with scores of owners of failed companies that provides economic relief from the state in return for worker input in decision making.

Another novelty for Venezuela and for much of Latin America is the stringent collection of taxes. Income tax in Venezuela dates back to the early '40s, but has never been seriously enforced. Over the last two years, the tax agency SENIAT has closed down scores of companies for 24 and 48 hours, including General Motors, McDonalds, and Eastman Kodak to penalize them for failing to keep accurate records.

Equally important is the new model's exclusion of representatives of powerful economic groups from key government posts in charge of economic decisions. Under past governments, the position of president of the Central Bank, Treasury Minister, Development Minister and Planning Minister usually went to representatives of big capital.

Given the economic expansion generated by high oil prices, investors may be more congenial to the new rules of the game than under normal circumstances. In the oil industry, dozens of foreign companies have accepted the state's insistence that it assume the controlling influence in all local oil operations. Only ExxonMobil announced intentions to pull out, while Chevron-Texaco maintains exceptionally friendly relations with the Chávez government. Since the defeat of the general strike in 2003, some Venezuelan capitalists have moderated their stance. Gustavo Cisneros, the Rockefeller of Venezuela, has apparently made his peace with Chávez, as shown by the more even-handed reporting of his TV station Venevisión, in contrast with its earlier hostility toward the government.

Exactly how the Chávez movement defines socialism, whether large capital is to play a positive role, and whether new property relations such as cooperatives will prosper are all questions that remain unanswered. Chávez says the new "socialist" model will largely be determined on the basis of trial-and-error. He has also announced that an "ideological congress" will be held for his movement in 2007 in order to open space for the first time for discussion of ideology.

The December 3 electoral outcome is perhaps more significant than all other elections since 1998. It represents a green light for a much-needed new model for Venezuela, which may be copied elsewhere in the continent. At stake are a more equitable distribution of wealth and greater opportunities for the non-privileged. Chávez and his followers insist that the goal of social justice is intricately tied to democracy.

Chávez's overwhelming victory after eight years in power recalls Franklin D. Roosevelt's three re-elections as president. In both cases, personalities and style were just a part of the presidential appeal, the other being the development of a new model to face a crisis situation. With 62 percent of voters behind him, the voting abstention rate of 25 percent at a 15-year low, the intransigent opposition more isolated and discredited than ever, and his rank-and-file calling for new measures, Chávez is well positioned to deepen the process of change. ■

STEVE ELLNER, a frequent contributor to *In These Times*, is co-editor of *Venezuela: Hugo Chávez and the Decline of an "Exceptional Democracy."*

Love the Warrior, Hate the War

Why progressives have more in common with the military than they think

BY LORELEI KELLY

WHEN ARMY COL. IKE Wilson returned home in March 2004 from a 12 month deployment in Iraq, one thought remained with him: “Why such a deliberate plan to fight the war, but none to win the peace to follow?”

Wilson, a West Point professor with years of military planning experience, knew that placing this question at the center of national security policy discussions was the only way to truly learn from Iraq and Afghanistan. He soon founded the Beyond War Project as a hub to educate both the military and the public about a new vision for war, peace and America’s role in the world. Thus far, he’s signed up participants ranging from Cornell University’s Peace Studies Program to the U.S. Air Force.

Wilson’s approach typifies today’s professional military education, which includes a breadth of topics that might surprise those more familiar with the liberal arts. In contrast to linear Cold War themes like strategic nuclear deterrence, military schools emphasize humanities subjects such as language, international cooperation and world culture. Such lessons arrived in these academic settings in the early part of the decade—though it took the terror attacks of 9/11 and two offensive U.S. military actions before elected leaders really paid attention to the dramatic shift from Cold War thinking.

Today, nearly every general that testifies before Congress claims that the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan do not have purely military solutions. This sea change means that many members of the military and progressives are philosophically much closer than either believes and they are both hurt by the lack of meaningful interaction. Understanding and aligning with the military around shared concerns could be a crucial new strategy for the left.



U.S. Army 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment Spc. Stephen Johnson greets Iraqi children during a 2003 New Year’s Eve party for children in Baghdad.

MARIO TAMIA/GETTY IMAGES

I TAUGHT PEACE STUDIES at Stanford University in California before moving to Washington in 1997 to work on Capitol Hill for Rep. Elizabeth Furse (D-Ore.). In 1995, Congress suffered a semi-lobotomy. The new conservative majority—under the guidance of Newt Gingrich’s Contract With America—cut many specialist staff and dismantled bipartisan educational organizations such as the Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus. My job was to establish an informal study group to educate staff on new national security issues.

As I set out to find important security initiatives to bring to Capitol Hill, I learned that most of the creative new government programs were in the military. I enrolled in classes—free to Hill staff—offered by the Air Command and Staff College and the National Defense University. I spent days at the Army War College, where the challenges of peace were on every conference agenda. While learning about topics ranging from peacekeeping to AIDS prevention, I came to know numerous military professionals eager to share knowledge

about international problem solving—most based on recent experience.

Montgomery McFate is an anthropologist who advises the military on the value of cultural knowledge. She points out how warfighting now sits at the intersection of traditional military activity and what is known as “human security.”

“Technology is not the key to victory in Iraq or Afghanistan, where so much of our effort is focused on building infrastructure, increasing their ability to build a government, establishing the rule of law and promoting civil society,” says McFate. “U.S. forces need to understand the human terrain in which they are operating.”

In both Iraq and Afghanistan, good government is our exit strategy. And if there is a good news story about Iraq, it is that U.S. soldiers have already applied lessons learned from the peace operations in the ’90s. In Haiti, the Balkans and even in Somalia, the importance of culturally sensitive conflict resolution was learned.

Good government is also a preventive strategy. As a whole, post-9/11 security threats are broad and inclusive, and re-

quire a variety of approaches—military, political, social and economic. Because so much of the institutional memory of post-Cold War security policy resides in the Defense Department, whoever figures out a way to engage and to learn from our military's experiences will have a wealth of policy ideas for moving forward.

SUCCESSFUL “BRANDING” BY conservatives has made liberals seem weak on national security. It has also created a lowest common denominator political discourse—especially the defense budget. The vast majority of members vote for defense bills that continue to fund a Cold War national security apparatus. The absence of a loyal opposition and real debate about national security has led us to where we are today: The U.S. military finds itself in a situation that it would have never gotten into on its own.

November's vote provides a timely opening to begin this conversation. With a new Democratic majority in Congress and the departure of Donald Rumsfeld, liberals must see past their anger over Iraq and grab the opportunity to learn from an unaccustomed source. Building relationships with military professionals will pay huge policy dividends when the time comes to pursue fundamental change on national security priorities.

The cost of the war has now passed half a trillion dollars—on top of a \$400 billion plus defense budget. A more rational budget will soon become imperative, and progressives can be in the vanguard instead of on the margin by including real military needs in their list of spending priorities before diverting the conversation back to domestic issues. They can also consistently de-link defense spending from war spending—after Iraq, the Army will need to be rebuilt after its experience in Iraq. The rise of a cohort of military advocates from the left would mark an important change: Confident progressive voices joining the debate over the appropriate mission of American armed forces.

Such allies are needed: Despite their ability to wield tremendous physical force, the military is vulnerable when it comes to protecting itself in the domestic policy process. The armed services' professional ethic forbids interference in political decision-making. Hence their fate is often influenced most by those poised to gain in the short-term, either financially or

politically, and who encounter no similar professional barriers —i.e., defense industry lobbyists, members of Congress and an executive branch obsessed by domestic politics.

This strategy is not unrealistic. Today's antiwar movement is leagues more sophisticated than the one that ended the Vietnam war. Today's liberal activist has learned how to be anti-war without being anti-warrior.

What's more, liberal philosophy shares many values with the military: looking after the general welfare, shared risk, sacrifice for common goals and long-term planning. Liberals value public service, and the military is our largest public institution. We also share many other areas of concern:

- **International human rights law:** U.S. military lawyers are human rights champions for Guantánamo prisoners and for the Geneva Conventions.
- **International treaties:** The U.S. Navy is one of the strongest advocates for the Law of the Sea.
- **Nuclear arms control:** The military generally finds nuclear weapons unusable.
- **Conflict resolution:** The Air Force has a prize-winning office of dispute resolution.
- **Renewable energy:** The U.S. military is the largest energy consumer in the country.
- **AIDS prevention:** The Defense Department has an extensive program to help foreign militaries.

Yet, Congress continues to drain billions from budget coffers to pay for Cold War programs like nuclear weapons and missile defense. The immediate military needs are more obvious: low-tech items like body armor, and human resource skills like language education.

THE AMERICAN MILITARY'S changing worldview has resulted in a sustained identity conflict within the institution. This tension will likely continue until younger generations move into leadership, entertaining very different notions of national security than those who came before them.

For younger officers, the idea that power is not dominance, but the ability to influence change, is a lesson learned from recent experience. One Marine Corps friend recently told me that while on a mission in East Timor, his bag of MREs

(meals ready to eat) was usually more helpful than his ammo belt, because he could make friends by handing them out to hungry locals. Contrast this experience with the linear, engineering mindset of the Cold War—where a rigid worldview fit nicely with hardware-heavy solutions. Low-tech is our future.

Frank G. Hoffman, a strategist for the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab in Quantico, Va., organized a gathering on Irregular Warfare in the summer of 2005 to expose military thinkers to the theories of social science and a more comprehensive view of intervention. “Without an appreciation for these skill sets and disciplines,” Hoffman says, “future military operations are doomed to failure.”

In November 2005, the Office of the Secretary of Defense released Directive 3000.5—an official document that elevated post-conflict reconstruction and support of civil society to a par with combat as a military priority. It remains to be seen whether or not this directive will be fully implemented. Yet it demonstrates that the institutional memory of the Defense Department is changing. Mid-level officers—whose formative military experiences were post-Cold War and whose assignments required a refresher of both counterinsurgency and sociology—are making their presence felt.

Citizens' legitimate fears about terrorism make security a gateway issue—a threshold that must be satisfied before any other priorities can be addressed. For liberals, appreciating the military and its evolving worldview just might provide the first step through this threshold. Hearing what the military has to say could give liberals a reality-tested idea around which to unify: that our left-over Cold War belief in dominance alone is obsolete and that we need new, far-reaching alternatives. The five military veterans joining the Democratic majority in the 110th Congress will facilitate this transition, as they speak with irreproachable first-hand knowledge.

It's time to be pro-military for all the right reasons. At dinner tables, public libraries, classrooms and city halls across America, let us listen to our warriors as they return. They will tell a story of change—one that Americans across the political spectrum need to hear. ■

LORELEI KELLY is the director of the Real Security Initiative at the White House Project. She also blogs at TheHuffingtonPost.com.

Does Andy Stern Talk His Walk?

High-profile victories by SEIU often run counter to its president's rhetoric about the 'power of persuasion'

BY DAVID MOBERG

JANITORS IN HOUSTON'S OFFICE buildings, mainly recent Latino immigrants, had special reasons for thanks this past Thanksgiving. They had just won their first contract, which will nearly double their income over two years—now as little as \$20 a day. But it took a month-long strike—backed by global protests, picket lines in other cities, civil disobedience in the face of police violence, and support from religious, civil rights and political leaders—to win their contract. Now the Service Employees International Union's victory will boost other organizing efforts in a region long hostile to worker rights, including the current campaign to organize Houston city employees.

SEIU, the nation's fastest-growing and second-largest union, often wins by using the power of its members around the country. For example, the well-established Chicago building services local led the Houston organizing effort. The union not only mobilizes workers but also employs other tactics to pressure employers, such as winning support from Houston's mayor and focusing negative publicity on specific building owners, such as Chevron, whose janitorial contractors pay low wages.

Such victories have helped make 55-year-old Andy Stern—the union's president for the past decade—one of the most influential union leaders in the country. But Stern has also roiled the larger labor movement, leading the 2005 departure of seven unions from the AFL-CIO to form the Change to Win federation. Contrarian and provocative, Stern seeks strategies that are at once visionary and pragmatic. He has also come under fire for being insufficiently democratic (even though he was once a pro-democracy insurgent), too eager to cooperate with employers and unwilling to defend traditional progressive ideas, such as single-payer national health insurance.

Stern's recent book—*A Country That Works: Getting America Back on Track*—is part memoir and part prescription



for the labor movement and progressive politics. Stern grew up in a middle-class, professional family, which he ruefully acknowledges does not provide him the traditional blue-collar credentials of union leaders. He was headed towards a career as a lawyer, but a temporary job as a social service worker led to his involvement in the Service Employees, rising in its ranks through both appointments by former President John Sweeney and election campaigns, such as his fight against Sweeney's chosen successor.

Now as president of the union, he thinks the labor movement must change dramatically. Globalization, he writes, has transformed the United States and the world in much the same way as the agricultural and industrial revolutions but with lightning speed, and consequently both American unionism and politics must change. The New Deal era—including its labor law, the industrial economy

and class struggle unionism—is ancient history. “Anyone who might long wistfully for a return to the New Deal policies of 1935 should consider that America today is as far from the time of FDR as the New Deal was from Abe Lincoln and the Civil War,” Stern writes.

Today, he argues, unions must seek partnerships with employers that improve both workers' lives and employers' profits. And unions must be willing to take on new roles: Rather than simply fight outsourcing of work, he argues, unions should be suppliers of a workforce for that outsourced labor, in the way that the building trades provide workers for construction projects through hiring halls.

His insights are intriguing, but Stern's analysis and prescriptions aren't always consistent or persuasive. He argues plausibly that the country needs a new plan to deal with globalization, a plan that he dubs “Team America,” which would in-

volve business, government and labor. But he contends that companies, not countries, now make the rules for the new global economy, raising the question of why any company would surrender that power willingly.

Stern ardently advocates—and dramatically practices—global unionism. But while he recognizes that current rules promote a global race to the bottom, he fails to offer a labor strategy for changing the rules of the global economy. He argues that labor should concentrate on organizing the service workers whose jobs can't be shipped overseas, but new rules—such as enforceable protections of worker rights—might affect which jobs stay by reducing the unfair competition offered by companies that abuse their workers.

Stern extols partnerships with business as a new strategy. Yet one of SEIU's most productive innovations—organizing an entire regional labor market of an industry, like building services, in order to prevent non-union firms from undercutting unionized companies—is an update of the classic union strategy of establishing the same wages for an industry, region or economic sector. Also, many unions—including big industrial unions like the UAW—have pursued partnerships with employers over the years with decidedly mixed results. And SEIU has established its most successful partnerships, such as with the Kaiser Foundation hospitals, first by demonstrating its power and resorting to confrontation.

As much as SEIU relies on the traditional union principle of worker solidarity to win, Stern writes that the labor movement must adapt to American individualism in its strategies—potentially at the expense of solidarity. And after decades of corporations engaging in what former UAW president Doug Fraser called a “one-sided class war,” which has resulted in growing inequalities of wealth and income, Stern's dismissal of class as an antiquated concept alien to Americans seems off the mark.

IN A RECENT interview with *In These Times*, Stern seemed torn between a vision of cooperation or conflict with employers—as he terms them, “the power of persuasion” and the “persuasion of power.”

He acknowledges that it's time to discuss “whether a very outdated labor law that's now 70 years old is relevant in the 21st century and whether the labor movement would be better off without it.” The

National Labor Relations Act, originally intended to reduce conflict, excludes large parts of the growing service workforce as a result of its definition of employees. For workers who are covered, he says the law has become a “way to reduce the rights of workers to have an organization,” a reference to the ways employers use labor law provisions to delay and foil organizing campaigns. “Maybe we should have more conflict.”

Despite his call for a visionary union strategy, Stern frequently seems to underestimate the potential for labor's role and for progressive politics.

But isn't his call for partnerships between unions and companies at odds with this call for conflict—and also out of touch with the reality of what corporations are doing? “I think it's in touch with what workers want from a union,” he says. “When we're polling them or talking to them, what workers constantly say is what they want the union to do is solve problems, not create them, at the workplace. Our workers, particularly in child care, home care and health care, are very focused on trying to make a contribution in terms of their patients' lives and quality of care. You have to start with ‘where are workers?’ not ‘where are employers?’ ”

Having initially argued for conflict, he continues to reject that strategy. “I don't think our model of unionism, when we start with the presumption that the employer is the problem, resonates very well with workers,” he says. “Most people don't hate their employer. They don't feel they have a voice sometimes. They don't feel they're compensated appropriately. But it doesn't mean they want to have class conflict with their employer.”

Ultimately, Stern sees workers and employers as having different but not necessarily conflicting interests. “In any situation you need to lead with the best of intentions, because then you give people choices,” he says. “Partnership may be too strong a word. The question is: How do you have a relationship among people who do have different interests? Unions represent an interest. Employers represent a different interest. But it doesn't mean you can't find common ground and common interests. So I don't think we should approach employers as if they

are the enemy.”

In any case, Stern insists, historically Americans have never thought in terms of class, but rather individual opportunity. “We need to appreciate from a progressive perspective that Americans don't relate to class conflict,” he says. “Class was an importation from other countries. It's not an indigenous American ideal.” Such ideals “are about opportunity, about freedom, about hard work, about kids do-

ing better than their parents, about the American dream.”

The United States is rich, Stern says, but the wealth needs to be redistributed. Yet redistribution involves overcoming both conflicting interests and an imbalance of power—not just reconciling different interests. Stern offers theories about cooperation, but in practice pursues redistribution through unionization and politics.

While he dismisses the New Deal as old hat, he's argued for strengthening Social Security by taxing wages and capital income that are currently exempt. And despite his controversial calls for a non-single payer universal health care plan to replace employer-based health insurance, he would reluctantly support expanding Medicare to cover everyone, or several other alternatives. But he thinks most Americans are individualistic and hostile to government, noting that progressives have failed for decades to win such a plan. Yet now, in a newly favorable climate, united labor leadership might make a Medicare-for-all law feasible.

Despite his call for visionary union strategy, Stern frequently seems to underestimate the potential for labor's role and for progressive politics. He slips into calculations about short-term prospects even as he dismisses incrementalism. It appears that cautious pragmatism, not long-term vision, is driving his overtures to Republicans and his support for guest worker programs most other unions reject.

Yet SEIU's demonstrated success organizing in Houston and elsewhere raises hopes that more ambitious political goals—expanding on the New Deal for a global era—may be realistic as well. ■

Vive La Revolution

A Stand Up History of the French Revolution.

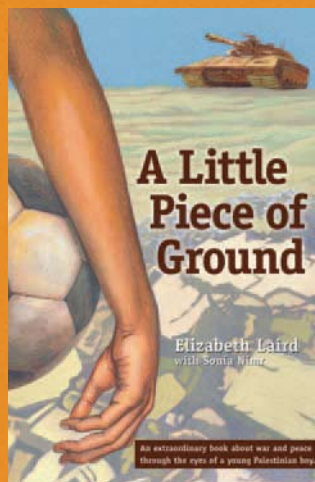
Brilliantly funny and insightful, *Vive la Revolution* puts individual people back at the center of this extraordinary story.

"A cross between a history of the French Revolution and a spirited defense of the ideals that inspired it."

—London's *Independent*



Mark Steel, \$14 ISBN: 1-931859-37-X



Elizabeth Laird, \$9.95 ISBN: 1-931859-38-8

A Little Piece of Ground

Occupied Palestine through the eyes of a young boy.

Twelve-year-old Karim and his family are trapped in their Ramallah home by a strict curfew. Meanwhile, Karim longs to play soccer with his friends. But in this city there's constant danger, even for schoolchildren. When Israeli soldiers find Karim outside during the next curfew, it seems impossible that he will survive.



HaymarketBooks

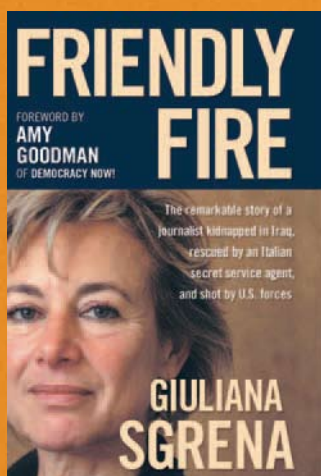
BOOKS FOR CHANGING THE WORLD

Friendly Fire

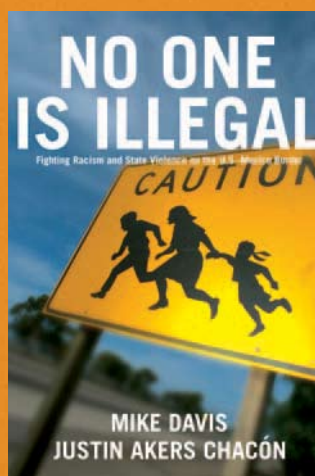
With a foreword by Amy Goodman

The remarkable story of a journalist kidnapped in Iraq, rescued by an Italian secret service agent, and shot by U.S. forces.

In this book, Sgrena describes her experience as a hostage and provides unique insights into the situation in Iraq, exposing U.S. war crimes there and revealing the human experience of life under occupation.



Giuliana Sgrena, \$20 cloth ISBN: 1-931859-39-6



No One Is Illegal

This year, a new civil rights movement exploded onto the scene of American politics—but there is still far to go to win justice for immigrants.

No One Is Illegal highlights the history of white vigilante violence in the U.S., drawing parallels with today's Minuteman Project, and

remembers the long tradition of resistance among immigrants organizing in the factories and the fields.

Mike Davis & Justin Akers-Chacón, \$14 ISBN: 1-931859-35-3

AVAILABLE IN STORES OR BY CALLING (773) 583-7884. VISIT OUR ONLINE STORE AT WWW.HAYMARKETBOOKS.ORG

A Dark Night in Iceland

Environmentalists decry the privatization of their country's clean energy resources

BY ANDREW STELZER

ON SEPTEMBER 28, THE lights went out in Reykjavik—for a publicity stunt to kick off the start of the annual international film festival. Although it was cloudy that night, and the stars did not shine down on the city, the romance of the return to the natural state for 30 minutes should have been a great pleasure to the man whose brainchild it was. But as reporters asked Andri Snær Magnason, a popular children's author, about his idea to let Icelanders appreciate the natural beauty of the night sky, he found only bitter irony that the same day also marked the start of one of the greatest man-made environmental disasters in Iceland's history.

As the lights came back on in the capital, 450 miles to the northeast several dozen square kilometers of fjords, waterfalls and reindeer-grazing grounds were going underwater, most likely never to be seen again.

The flooding was engineered in preparation for the opening of the Kárahnjúkar Power Station, located in Egilsstaðir, a town of 2,000 people in eastern Iceland. Consisting of 5 major dams, this hydroelectric project blocked two glacial rivers—the Jökulsá á Dal and Jökulsá í Fljótssdal—that, until September, had run into Héraðsflói Bay. Today, however, they flow into a reservoir, which will cover 22 square miles and be 200 feet deep by the fall of 2007. Water will be brought from the reservoir to the power station through a series of tunnels more than 30 miles long, drilled through mountains and reinforced with steel.

"This was the last piece of wilderness in Iceland vegetated from glacier to sea," says photographer Bjarki Bragason. "So it was a one-off specimen of Arctic nature that's rapidly disappearing; not only here but in the other countries as well." Bragason, a prototypical Scandinavian at well over 6 feet, spent 10 days hiking around the site, before and after the 650-foot high dam was closed, to photograph what many consider



The Kringilsá River where it meets the Jökulsá á Fljótssdal River. Since the photo was taken both glacial rivers have been dammed.

BJARKI BRAGASON

the last real wilderness in Europe.

Bragason says the damming of the muddy rivers will harm the marine ecosystem. "The chemicals that are in glacial rivers are extremely important for the ecosystem of the sea, and when it is not running its direct course anymore, those chemicals won't be distributed into the seabed, and the sea itself," he explains. "That's something we don't know the consequences of." Bragason adds that the project is unsustainable.

Bragason calls the power station an "island in the energy system," because none of the energy generated will directly ben-

efit Icelanders. Instead, it will all flow 18 miles southeast of the dam, to the town of Reyðarfjörður, where the U.S.-based company Alcoa has built an aluminum smelter, scheduled to start operations in April.

Last March, Magnason changed his cap from children's book author to investigative journalist when he published *Dreamland: A Self-help Book for a Scared Nation*, a best-selling expose of the Icelandic government's plan to sell off virtually all of the nation's hydroelectric and geothermal power. By "just Googling two things together," Magnason says he was able to un-

cover a scheme by government engineers to turn Iceland into what he calls a kind of “Northern Kuwait.” As a result, this island nation of 300,000 is going through what he calls “a democratic revolution.” But the question remains: When the next elections arrive in May, will it all be too late?

TURN ON A kitchen faucet in Iceland, and the water is hot—scalding hot. It comes straight from underground, no heating needed; in other words, it’s a clean energy advocate’s dream. “Iceland is the only western country that produces all its electricity from emission-free and sustainable natural resources in the form of geothermal and hydro power,” reads the first sentence of “Environment in Our Hands,” a 10-page brochure published by Landsvirkjun, Iceland’s state-owned power company. A statement on their Web site adds: “Our aim is to take full advantage of Iceland’s energy resources.”

It’s Iceland’s potential to become the world’s first country reliant only on clean energy that has made the power station the most hotly debated issue in decades. Environmentalists maintain that the gov-

ernment is selling off their resources to multinationals in a way similar to third world dictatorships, while supporters argue that those corporations would otherwise go elsewhere, and invest in more environmentally harmful projects.

Iceland has the world’s highest electricity consumption per capita, but because of its geothermal and hydroelectric power plants, the country’s level of CO₂ emissions from electricity production is the lowest in the Western world. Magnason says that the government and the national energy company have used Iceland’s green reputation as political cover for decisions that run counter to the goal of sustainability.

A special exemption negotiated under the Kyoto Protocol is of particular concern. In 1990, when most other countries were told they had to reduce carbon emissions, and require companies to pay for excess pollution, Iceland was given permission to raise its CO₂ emissions by about 10 percent. Furthermore, a “small country” provision, tailor-made for Iceland, was created, exempting the nation from counting most emissions caused by new power-intensive industries. As Lands-

virkjun, the national power company puts it: “The benefit to Icelanders of this provision is 50 percent of their 1990 emissions being added to their quota.”

The benefits to any industry that relocates to Iceland are numerous. No need to buy carbon credits; instead, they can brag to investors and critics that they use “clean” energy and are thus saving the planet. Alcoa spokeswoman Erna Indrioadóttir says criticism of Kárahnjúkar should be directed at the government, not Alcoa. Yet, she thinks it is the right way to go. “We have green resources here in Iceland and a lot of people think that we should use them in a sensible way, and that’s what Parliament decided.” Many Icelanders beg to differ.

In August 2001, the Icelandic National Planning Agency had ruled against the dam, citing environmental concerns. Landsvirkjun appealed to Siv Fríðleifsdóttir, the minister for the environment and a member of the ruling Progressive Party that had pushed hard for the project, to reverse the ruling.

She did so just before Christmas, says Steingrímur Sigfússon, a member of Parliament who represents the Left-Green Party. “She was hoping that everyone would be too busy shopping,” he says. “It was against all the scientific arguments—all the research of this assessment process. They simply used brute political force to turn this assessment research around.”

More than 45,000 people had signed petitions opposing the project, yet in 2002, parliament approved the dam and, in 2003, Alcoa’s aluminum smelter. After that, local activists put out an international call for help in 2005. Foreigners from Europe, North America and Australia arrived, bringing direct-action activism to a nation unaccustomed to people chaining themselves to bulldozers. Summer-long campouts, teach-ins and frequent actions near the construction site galvanized the public. But some activists believe similar tactics in 2006 may have backfired, as Alcoa and the government were prepared to characterize the activists as pseudo-terrorists to the press. Public opposition to the dam remained, but the conversation about whether the government should back out got sidetracked into debate about the appropriateness of the protests themselves.

“It didn’t cause the discussion that it caused last year,” says organizer Birgitta Jónsdóttir, a poet and veteran of anti-globalization protests. She says that Alcoa paid to send some Icelandic police officers

Doctorate *degree* **CRITICAL PEDAGOGY** *advancing social justice*

Be a change agent in the struggle for justice and liberation

Critical pedagogy is an interdisciplinary field that is committed to social justice, equality and democracy. It aims to understand education through a critical examination of the unequal power dynamics in society and offers alternatives to the status quo.

The only program of its kind, the University of St. Thomas critical pedagogy program is an intensive, yet flexible program ideal for busy, working adults. The hybrid format of classes one weekend a month and online components provides an excellent opportunity for students to attend from long distance.

For More Information
(651) 962-4550
(800) 328-6819, Ext. 2-4550
education@stthomas.edu
www.stthomas.edu/education/ci



SoE0788_07

Apply Now!
New Cohort
Summer 2007



ANDREW STELZER

Dreamland author
Andri Snær Magnason
with his daughter

to the United States for training last year. “The cops were prepared in ’06,” she says.

In a last-ditch attempt to stop the project, on September 26, 15,000 people marched in cities across the country—the largest demonstration since the country was granted independence from Denmark in 1944. The Reykjavik march was led by Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, who became the world’s first democratically elected female president in 1980. Most of the protesters were in Reykjavik (which has almost two-thirds of the country’s population), but even in the small town of Egilsstaðir, 200 people came out and marched in the dark. Whether people thought that they could actually stop the project is unclear—but it brought the issue to the forefront of this May’s parliamentary elections.

Iceland’s majority coalition currently holds 34 of the 63 parliament seats, and Sigfússon says he believes even if that number goes down to 32, the coalition will break down and Prime Minister Geir H. Haarde and his cabinet will be forced to resign. He says the elections could turn on candidates’ position on Kárahnjúkar and similar projects.

“More and more people are becoming concerned as to what right we as a single generation have to behave in this way,” says Sigfússon. If the Left-Green Party comes to power, he says, they will call for a full stop to energy development for the next three to five years and initiate a debate about what land will be permanently preserved and where to locate big industry.

Since 2002, Alcoa has argued that sparsely populated eastern Iceland needed jobs, and that the smelter would reinvigorate the local economy. Young people have increasingly moved to Reykjavik, and locals fear that the demise of their farm- and fishing-centered culture is imminent. Politicians have long promised some sort of large industrial project as a cure-all, and the governing coalitions takes credit for what they say will be an economic boon.

But the benefits to the local economy are unclear. The smelter will only open up 750 jobs. With unemployment in Reyðarfjörður and Egilsstaðir low, and only 2,600 residents, including children and the elderly, between them, Foreign workers will likely pick up the slack.

Sigfússon notes that such industrialization isn’t needed in a nation with an unemployment rate hovering around 2 percent, a highly valued currency and a 2005 GDP of over \$35,000 USD per person. “There’s no real need for these huge investments,” he says. “And actually, you can argue that we would be better off without them because they are so big in the Icelandic economy, that they are actually pushing out other sectors.”

Landsvirkjun has other plans. Its environmental policy calls for “the prioritization of possible development of the central highlands of Iceland in order to avoid conflicts about individual energy development projects.” This indicates, says Sigfússon, that several more big industrial projects are in the works, in even more re-

mote locations. “One government is making a decision that will mark our country for the next 200 years.”

ON REYKJAVIK’S TRENDY Laugavegur Street, in the Hljómalind cooperative coffee shop, an activist bulletin board has sign-up sheets reading, “Stop Alcoa—Protect Your Paradise.” Anna Ágústsdóttir, a veteran of the women’s rights movement, vows that Icelanders will “absolutely” stop the next smelter, which Alcoa is already planning. “People are coming to realize that even if it were not for nature [related] reasons but for economic reasons, it would still be a better choice not to go on with this policy.”

Magnason’s *Dreamland* has been instrumental in shifting public opinion. Painting a scenario in which Iceland has the opportunity to use its energy to become a sustainable nation, *Dreamland* details the economic benefits that such a decision would offer, before delving into what actually took place on the Kárahnjúkar project. The book woke up the small nation to a nightmarish reality far removed from its own self-image.

“The old saying was ‘Well, Iceland is so untouched and unspoiled and we are so few so there is nothing to worry about here,’” says Sigfússon, the Left-Green party MP. “And it was to a large extent true until 10 to 15 years ago. That reality is changing very quickly now, and if we keep going the way we are, it will be terrible.”

A dwindling number of activists hold out hope that the dam could still be reopened before spring, when the glacial melts will begin raising the reservoir to its full height, and the last of the untouched land will go underwater. But April is also when, as Alcoa’s Indrioadóttir puts it, “the first metal is planned to flow.” Much more likely to appear are glowing reports on business pages about Alcoa exporting aluminum to Europe and the United States, to be used in everything from electric cables to weapons for U.S. troops in Iraq.

“The dam is producing aluminum for the world market,” says Magnason. “But the world was never asked if they wanted waterfalls and reindeer and wild geese. So we want to ask people, because we are in a competitive world, which would they prefer—the monument that produces nature, or some beer cans?” ■

ANDREW STELZER is a freelance journalist. He can be reached at www.andrewstelzer.com.

BY KARI LYDERSEN

Kiko Martinez: Watch Listed for Life

Shortly after the 9/11 attacks, Francisco “Kiko” Martinez, a Colorado civil rights attorney and long-time Chicano activist, was flying home from visiting family in Washington state. At the Salt Lake City airport, federal officials barred him from making his connecting flight back

to Colorado. After they questioned and prohibited him from boarding his flight, he ended up taking a bus home.

Turns out he was on the “no fly” list, a shadowy roster of thousands of people the government has identified as potentially having links to terrorism. People can end up on the list because of legal political activity or membership in legal groups; or just because they have the same name as someone the government is keeping an eye on. Those erroneously listed have included an Air Force sergeant, an attorney, a minister and even children.

Since November 2001, the Transportation Security Administration has adhered to two lists: a “no fly” list that prevents people from boarding any commercial airliner and a “select list” that subjects them to extra screening and questioning.

In 2003 a broader “U.S. master terror watch list” combined 12 government lists into a register of more than 100,000 people. The list, officially called the FBI-CIA Terrorist Threat Integration Center, is meant to “create a structure to institutionalize sharing across agency lines of all terrorist threat intelligence,” according to a government fact sheet.

Martinez likely made it onto these lists because of 1973 charges related to package bombs sent by Chicano activist groups. He fled to Mexico from Colorado, saying he feared for his life since local police officers were out to get him. He eventually went to trial in 1980 af-

ter crossing back into the United States. The charges were either dropped or ended in acquittals.

On three other occasions while driving, Martinez, 60, has also been detained by law enforcement for no obvious reason beyond his activist past. In July 2000, police held him after he got a speeding ticket in Pueblo, Colo., and in December 2004, in Morris, Ill., when he and his family were driving back from a national cross-country meet his son was competing in.

Most recently, he was detained on April 19, 2005. While driving back from giving a speech at the University of New Mexico, a state trooper and Pojoaque tribal officer pulled Martinez over. He was held while the officers called an FBI agent, who asked questions, then ordered his release. This summer he filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Santa Fe challenging the detention.

And on Dec. 4, Martinez filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Chicago, charging that Illinois state police and local FBI agents violated his Fourth Amendment rights against unreasonable search and seizure during the Morris traffic stop. Since Martinez can’t fly, at a Chicago press conference about the lawsuit, attorney Jim Fennerty of the National Lawyer’s Guild placed his photo on an empty chair with a phone broadcasting his voice to media.

The next day, Martinez spoke with *In These Times*.

How did you end up on the watch list?

I was placed on the Violent Gang and Terrorist Organization File (VGTOF). Basically the only guidelines for being placed on that list are that a police officer nominates you. That’s what we think happened to me. The government won’t confirm or deny it. The only way we figured it out is on the police reports from Colorado and New Mexico it mentions the VGTOF.

What effect has this had on your life and work?

We supposedly have a constitutional right to travel, but I can’t get on a plane. If I drive, even the slightest infraction can result in a detention of one to three hours or more. I have to be careful who I travel with because I don’t want to subject most people to what I have to go through if I’m stopped.

And, of course, there’s the racial profiling that happens on most highways. The time I was stopped in Colorado [in 2000], I think it was racial profiling. I was driving an Oldsmobile sedan fixed up nice, they probably thought a young gangster was driving it.

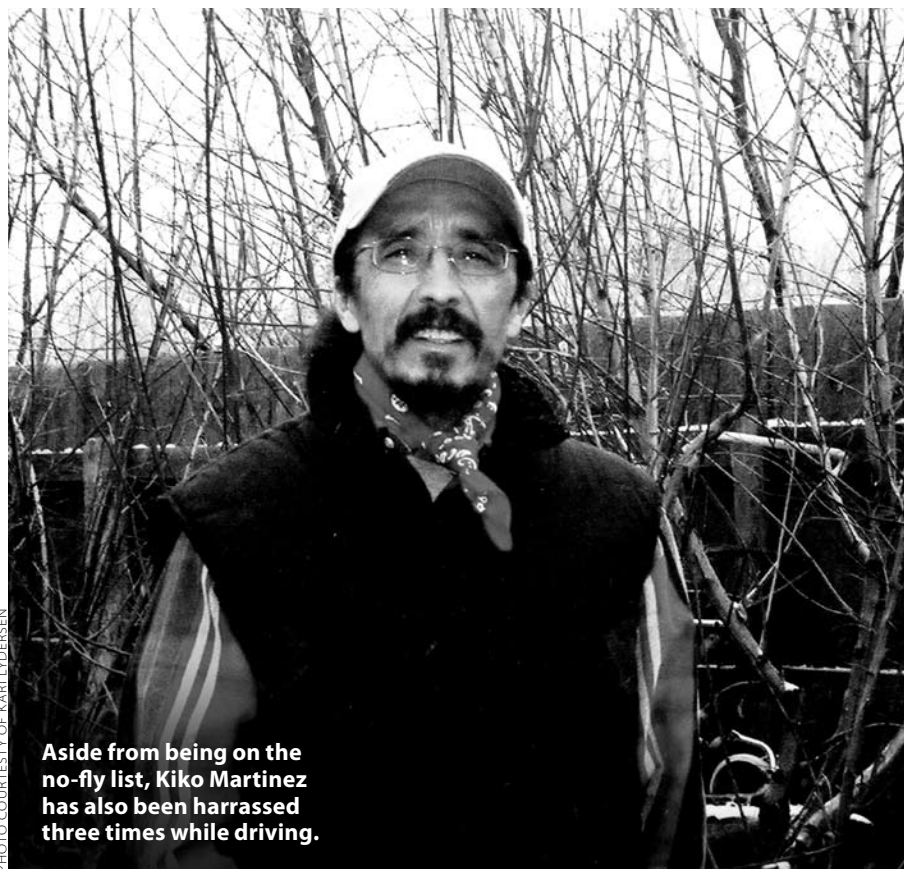
The world is a fast place these days, so this has really slowed me down, since I can’t fly or drive long distances.

Do you truly feel you are not able to fly?

I wasn’t allowed to fly before. I don’t want to subject myself to that humiliation again.

How does the current surveillance and monitoring of activists or suspected dissidents—through things like the watch list—compare to the situation in the ‘60s and ‘70s?

The current technology enables them to access and use that data much quicker than in the ‘60s and ‘70s. Then, the police would have contact cards they’d keep on people. Now, they just type your information into a computer and it comes up.



Aside from being on the no-fly list, Kiko Martinez has also been harassed three times while driving.

Do you think the government intends this watch list to have a chilling effect on political speech or activity?

I'm sure they figured it would. It chills people's will to exercise their First Amendment rights. A lot of people are afraid they will lose their job or it will affect their family [if they get placed on a list like this].

I see this as the next generation of COINTELPRO [the infamous FBI program run from 1956 to 1971 which tried to destabilize dissident groups through harassment, surveillance and infiltration]. It's set up to destroy and neutralize things.

After Watergate and the Nixon era, there was a movement to prevent the government from spying on people unless they really had a reason to. But this so-called war on terror has given them a pretext to increase spying again. People are starting to speak out about it, but who knows when the next terrorist attack will happen? Then that will mean they can take away even more of our rights.

Along with activist histories like yours, what current activities or affiliations do you think are landing people on the list?

Environmentalists, immigrant-rights advocates, attorneys and individuals who speak out on behalf of those who are targeted, antiwar activists, media persons who are not embedded with the government, black nationalists, Puerto Rican *independentistas*, indigenous nation advocates and others who struggle against corporations and the government dominated by corporations [are all at risk].

You were involved in radical movements tied to violence 30 years ago. Do you think there's a valid reason for having you on a list like this?

The guidelines for the VGTOF say you must be part of an "ongoing organization." But these things happened 25 or 30 years ago. The state has such a long memory, even if generations of agents have passed on, they will keep you on the list.

But if they just followed their own guidelines, I wouldn't be on it. Also it

says you can only be detained if they have reason to believe you have or are about to commit a crime. They had no reason to believe that with me.

Do you think this list is at all effective in preventing terrorism?

No, the way police usually find out something's afoot is through informants—being there on the street. This is just random stops and searches and seizures. Many people don't know their constitutional rights and will agree to searches.

As a tactical matter, it's hard to tell a policeman no. If you buck them a little, it gets them mad. With police so aggressive, with Tasers and steroid rages [refusing a search could mean trouble]. Most of the country's interstates are considered drug routes, so an officer could always use the pretext of the war on drugs.

What do you hope to accomplish with the lawsuits?

Something productive will come of it. At least we are able to engage the government, otherwise they would never talk to you about it. We're hoping by bringing more attention to this, more people will take steps to find out if they are on the list.

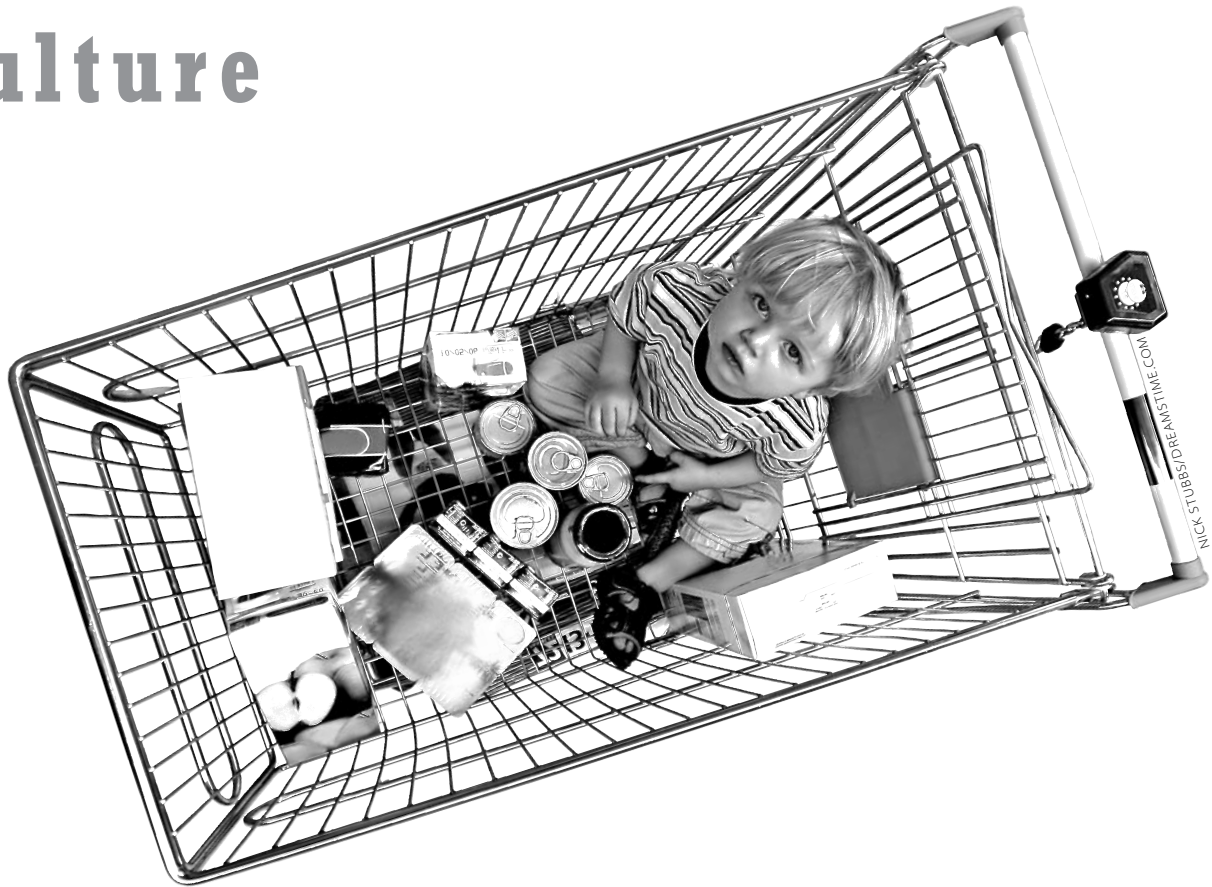
What do you think will happen with the cases filed in Chicago and New Mexico?

Well, they've assigned the Chicago case to Judge Amy St. Eve, [a Bush II appointee] who's hearing the Muhammad Salah case [a Chicago area grocer accused of financing Hamas]. She's made some terrible moves in that case. In New Mexico, the government is saying they don't want their agents deposed, they don't want discovery; that the case involves state secrets and national security.

Not all judges are falling into lockstep with the Department of Justice. Some judges are ruling against the government, so the Department of Justice is trying to settle cases so the Bush gang can continue its imperial presidency and be a secret government.

Are you hoping to get off the list?

I don't think you can ever really get off the list. They'll always have another generation of lists. ■



BY DANIEL THOMAS COOK

Children of the Brand

As I sat in the café of a Borders bookstore in Chicago huddled over my laptop and struggling to write about children and commercialism, I was interrupted by an annoying clamor of loud talk, screams and laughter. I looked over and to my

horror discovered it was a group of ... kids! How dare children disrupt my ruminations on childhood!

Accepting my fate, I behaved like a social researcher: I observed the scene. "Welcome to Borders Explorers," exclaimed their hostess in a voice intended for seven-year-olds. "We are excited to have you here. We have a lot of fun things planned for your stay with us." On each table stood a cardboard cutout of the "Border Explorer"—a goofy-looking cartoon character sporting winged goggles and an outfit that intimated a '50s version of a "futuristic" space suit. Clearly a boy (explorers are still male, apparently), the character displayed a gigantic "B" on his belt.

As the students colored in an image of the Borders Explorer character, the staff member explained the morning's plan. Each table would be given several

topics, such as "seals" and "mountains," to be divided among the students, who would then go to the children's section and find books on the topic.

The children's section was clearly "kid-themed," with an entranceway in colorful "kid letters," a soft stars-and-planets carpet, floor level displays and a nonlinear arrangement of bookshelves. The iconography and organization of the section revealed the same method of age ascendance that I had found in my historical research on the rise of the child consumer. The books and small toys intended for the youngest children were situated in the back corner; the age ladder progressively moved up toward the entrance area where items intended for the oldest children (9 and 10-year-olds) were displayed. Such an arrangement is designed to avoid exposing the older children to un-

desirable “babyish” things—which could “pollute” them by association—while giving the younger children, who must pass through this area, a feeling of maturity, perhaps even of desire.

Brands and branding

Delightful and insidious at once, Borders endeavors to brand the experience of reading and exploring ideas. Paradoxically, Borders strives, on the one hand, to stimulate the children’s curiosity and, on the other, to numb their critical faculties with characters, arts-and-crafts activities and merchandise placement. They’re encouraged to explore everything about Borders—except of course the company’s brand strategy.

Branding resides, first and foremost, in the realm of design. The quintessential marriage of art and commerce, branding, when it works best, is inspired by aesthetic sensibility and intuition, and guided by market research. Brands—their iconography, acoustics, tastes, physical feelings and smells—coax us to react but not to analyze. Every moment is to be infused not just with “style” or “beauty,” but with emotional bonding to a corporate entity. At least, this is the dream of brand managers. Art, in its most general sense, serves as an ideal vehicle for connecting human emotions to a material object because it strikes us at a pre-analytic level. We experience it and react to it before we can reflect on it.

However, corporate ingenuity and the colonization of art and design for promotional effect is not the entire story. Children and adults, after all, want things, buy things and identify with things. We are not completely helpless creatures, but active beings searching for meaning and significance.

Meaning-full brands

The kids’ market has proven lucrative (well into \$100 billion annually), in large part because both kids and parents derive personal wellbeing from the goods and images of contemporary consumer capitalism. When asked why she put “Blues Clues” characters on her four-year-old’s

birthday cake, a 33-year-old mother told me that a simple “Happy Birthday” was generic and not special.

Brands—in their artful presence as icons, images and styles—seek to accomplish the somewhat contradictory task of allowing people to forge personal identities out of

The quintessential marriage of art and commerce, when branding works best, it is inspired by aesthetic sensibility and intuition, and guided by market research.

mass-produced, mass-distributed, readily available goods and images. To grasp the power of brand appeal, one need only think of those who tattoo the Nike swoosh on their bodies, name their kids after global brands like Puma or spend hours blogging about their favorite products.

Retailers, designers, marketers and merchandisers have known for the better part of a century something that social scientists are now just learning. To cultivate a consumer market at a deep level, beyond simple functional need, consumers must be approached and addressed as having desires and aspirations that transcend the specific product at hand. For many of us, as brand managers have discovered, the “need” for belonging, for intimacy, for respect, for individuality and for being seen as someone worthy in the eyes of others is what drives consumption and brand attachment. Some of the key “needs” of children, who by default are relatively powerless economically (but quite powerful emotionally), include recognition, aspiration and a sense of ownership over their world.

Kids aspire to be older than they are at whatever age because, early in life, they recognize their position on the lower rungs of the social ladder. Hence retailers, like Borders, design spaces that encode both aspiration to older, more autonomous identities and distance from younger, undesirable selves. Any savvy package designer knows that a child’s product, if it is to have any chance on the market, must appear to appeal to the age group just older than the intended end-user. Something intended for a six-year-old boy will probably not do well if a six-year-old is pictured on it—better an eight-year-old.

Making such appeals directly to a child

is, historically speaking, new and revolutionary. The recognition and appeasement of the child’s point of view in commercial contexts began in the ’30s and marked a change not only in marketing and merchandising, but in parent-child relations as well. The child’s view now

must be acknowledged, addressed and satisfied in many arenas of social life. For a parent to do otherwise is to set themselves up as morally suspect.

The strongest institutional urge to “know” and speak to the child’s view comes from the world of marketing, branding and design. It is marketers, often more than parents, who are in tune with kids and their worlds. They visit children’s bedrooms and query them about their decorating, clothing and music choices. They attend girls’ sleepover parties and convene focus groups to observe “tweens” discussing the benefits of various products. In doing so, marketers venerate children’s commercial choices as a democratic exercise. They insist that, in this way, they are “empowering” children.

These children certainly appeared to be “empowered” as they actively delved into the books. But, I had to wonder, if it is the kind of power that will transcend its corporate inspired origins and help the kids navigate contemporary life, or if this “category management” will serve only to infuse brand attachment into the minds of those just learning about the world. It is almost criminal to discourage the next generation from reading and engaging with books. This day, however, was not about books or reading for the young Explorers. It was about engineering the Borders™ experience and cultivating consumers, ultimately re-empowering those who already have the power to produce experiences in addition to products. ■

DANIEL THOMAS COOK is an associate professor of advertising and communications at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He is the author of *The Commodification of Childhood* and editor of the forthcoming *Lived Experiences of Public Consumption*.



James Bond: Is his
suaveness a sickness?

PHOTO COURTESY OF SONY PICTURES

FILM

The Spychopath Who Loved Me

By Brian Cook

IF THERE'S A pop cultural icon in dire need of being revisited—and revised—at this historical moment, it is Bond, James Bond. Now that our leaders' own fantasies of besting evil supervillains and making the world bend to their fancies have run aground on the reality-based community known as Iraq, surely it is time for Bond—who shares with his real-life state employers a similar combination of superior technology, unthinking machismo and rakish charm—to look in the mirror and face some unsavory truths.

It's to the credit of the writers of *Casino Royale*—Neal Purvis, Robert Wade and Paul Haggis—that just such a scene occurs midway into the 21st installment of this apparently inexhaustible franchise. Having just brutally murdered by hand two Ugandan freedom fighters of unnamed cause—one thing *Casino Royale* fails to revise is the series' casual racism—a shaken Bond (Daniel Craig, aptly mixing ferocity with emotional restraint) washes the blood off his hands and greedily devours a giant glass of whiskey in a vain attempt to steady his nerves. Taking a moment to collect himself, he stares numbly at his reflection in the bathroom mirror, his previously suave tuxedo torn to bits and drenched in blood. It's not a pretty sight.

Although *Casino Royale* offers up the

ludicrous plot, obligatory pyrotechnics and dutifully pulse-pounding chase sequences of any run-of-the-mill blockbuster, it distinguishes itself from the lumpen pack by presenting a Bond whose ultra-cool and debonair demeanor is no longer simply an aspect of his personality. Rather, the film takes considerable pains to suggest that this womanizing and shrewd, instrumentalizing persona is a rational *response* to—or escape from—his dehumanizing line of work. The film repeatedly emphasizes that Bond's emotional numbness is what allows him to do his job in the first place.

A typical example occurs when Bond needs to learn more about a suspect, and

so seduces the man's wife to (ahem) pump her for information. Getting what he needs, he leaves her immediately—there's a terrorist plot to foil—but upon his return, finds that she has been tortured and killed for her transgression. Staring at the woman's mangled corpse alongside an unmoved Bond, M (Judi Dench, in imperious matron mode) remarks that she might be worried that Bond's responsibility for her death would affect his detachment, except, "that doesn't seem like an issue for you." Bond says nothing.

Bond's detachment, however, is soon threatened by the introduction of Vesper Lynd (Eva Green), a British Treasury officer who will control Bond's share in a high-stakes poker game hosted by the nefarious Le Chiffre at the Casino Royale hotel. (Did I mention the ludicrous plot?) How their relationship develops is predictable enough (although if you're worried about spoilers, now would be the time to stop reading): They will start off as flirtatious, yet antagonistic adversaries. They will then fall hopelessly in love. And, inevitably, Vesper will be unmasked as a "femme fatale," a mole who works for the enemy and betrays Bond.

Formulaic as the course of this relationship may be, its characterization is decidedly not, particularly in comparison to previous Bond films. Upon first meeting Bond, Vesper archly observes that he's a man who views women as "disposable pleasures rather than meaningful pursuits."

Atheists, Humanists, Freethinkers, Agnostics

Secular Coalition for America www.secular.org

Support our efforts to protect and strengthen the secular character of our government and to increase the respectability of our community's viewpoints.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Secular Coalition for America P.O. Box 53330, Washington, DC 20009-9330

To make a credit card gift go to www.secular.org/support.html

As a 501(c)(4) organization gifts are not tax-deductible

While other “Bond girls” have shown similar pluck, they typically melt after being heroically rescued by Bond. But in *Casino Royale*, Bond never rescues Vesper; in fact, it’s she who saves his life, twice.

Indeed, one of the charms of *Casino Royale* is its insistence on either ignoring or subverting the standard Bond genre expectations. There is no visit with Q and no fancy gadgets. At one point, after a furious Bond orders a martini and the bartender inevitably asks “Shaken or stirred?” he snaps, “Do I look like I give a damn?” There’s even a scene that directly echoes the infamous sequence from the first Bond film, *Dr. No*, in which Ursula Andress emerges, Venus-like, from the ocean—only this time, it’s Bond who arises from the water, soaking wet, clad in a too-tight swimsuit, chest bursting out.

More than just clever allusions, these subversions point to one of the film’s major (if not only) concerns: Can Bond refuse to be what he is *supposed* to be: a mindless killer serving at the enjoyment of his masters (or, perhaps, the audience)? After he falls in love with Vesper,

he tells her that he’s leaving Mi6 because he needs “to get out while I still have whatever small part of my soul is left,” so that he can devote it to her.

Structurally, of course, that can’t happen, but not because of any logic within the film. If anything, *Casino Royale* argues that Bond’s work makes him an uncaring, paranoid sociopath. But you don’t let a character who has made your studios \$1.3 billion over the past 40 years quit his job. (James Bond will return, indeed.) Thus, Vesper must betray Bond, turning him back to the soulless embrace of Mi6. And in its last shot, *Casino Royale* joins the cold embrace as well, picturing an omnipotent Bond standing over a wounded adversary, giant machine gun in hand, and introducing himself with the staid catchphrase—“I’m Bond, James Bond”—the insane fantasy restored intact. To crib Vesper—a warm character, sacrificed on the altar of commerce—*Casino Royale* may attempt a meaningful pursuit of what makes Bond tick, but in the end, it’s all too willing to accept being a mere disposable pleasure. ■

BOOKS

Seeds of Hope: Gardening in Barren Times

By Joshua Arthurs

THE IMAGE OF the *Hortus conclusus*—literally “enclosed garden”—has had a place in Western art and literature at least as far back as the book of Genesis. The Garden of Eden was humanity’s first home, an earthly paradise walled off from the wasteland.

Gardens have always been places apart, spaces of contemplation and respite from the travails of everyday life. They fulfill basic human needs, producing sustenance and bringing us into contact with the vital forces of the natural world.

In his *Defiant Gardens: Making Gardens in Wartime* (Trinity University Press), professor of landscape architecture Kenneth Helphand explores the many meanings of the *hortus con-*

[art space]



More than 150 works by 60 self-trained artists comprise **Home and Beast**, a “mega-exhibition” that spans six separate galleries at the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore, Md. The size of the exhibit is equal to its goal: To describe the complex relationships between humans and animals. Home and Beast brings together short film, installation, folk and outsider art forms to chart the myths and symbolic language that help to define our ever-evolving role within the animal kingdom.

Pictured is Nancy Josephson’s “Duck Urn.” Josephson, a self-proclaimed outsider artist, is a voodoo practitioner whose religious beliefs heavily influence her work. For more information, visit www.avam.org

—Erin Polgreen

read the latest underground classic

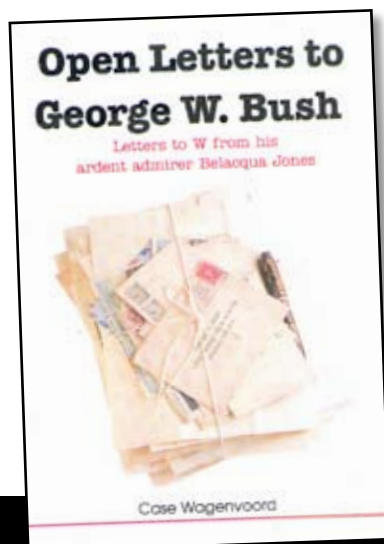
Imagine Karl Rove on methamphetamine and you have Bush's shadow advisor, Belacqua Jones. Belacqua peppers the president with daily letters of encouragement and advice in which:

- He praises the president's Eternal War of the Empty Policy
- He tells the president how to shoot Jesus full of theological steroids
- He mourns the martyrdom of St. Thomas De Lay

This is a must read for those seeking a dark vision of American politics and life seen through the cracked lens of substance abuse and a Neocon ideology run amok.

AVAILABLE AT AMAZON.COM

READ BELACQUA'S BLOG AT :
<http://blogs.salon.com/0004024>



A garden on the site of Skra, the former sports stadium on Okopowa Street in the Warsaw ghetto in 1940.

clusus as expressed under the most extreme conditions. As the title suggests, Helphand is interested in gardens that defy impossible circumstances, including war, genocide, exile and imprisonment.

Readers might be familiar with wartime "Victory Gardens" (vegetable patches grown to supplement food rations) but the author has a different kind of nourishment in mind. As he puts it, gardens also serve as "mechanisms of human survival." They provide a sense of familiarity and tranquility; they express individual creativity and communal solidarity; they feed not only the body but the mind and the soul.

Helphand distills these various functions into the themes of "life, home, hope, work and beauty," which he then traces across historical moments in which human dignity was trampled upon: the blood- and muck-filled trenches of World War I; the Jewish ghettos of Nazi-ruled Eastern Europe; prisoner-of-war camps during World War II; and Japanese-American internment camps. In each instance, he grounds his case studies in their historical context and makes evocative use of archival documents, diaries and memoirs. Gardens and gardeners are vividly depicted through photographs, designs and sketches.

Helphand demonstrates an uncommon sensitivity and compassion for his subjects, ordinary people (rarely pro-

fessional gardeners) living in extraordinary times.

Discussing gardening during the Holocaust, when the seemingly innocuous act of planting became a deliberate gesture of defiance, Helphand writes, "normal behavior in abnormal conditions took courage. The ordinary became extraordinary. The expected unexpected. Who imagined gardens in the ghetto?" The tiny plots yielded little in terms of crops—a few potatoes, some shriveled cabbage—but defied the bleakness of their urban surroundings. For an imprisoned people deprived of the capacity for productive activity, the chance to reap the fruit of their labor meant the difference between emotional survival and spiritual death.

By the same token, ending that production signaled the extinguishing of hope. The children of the Lodz ghetto had planted a small garden, but upon learning that they would be deported, "a spontaneous fury seized them." Helphand writes:

They went to their gardens and, in a burst of anger, trampled the few beds of pathetic beets. ... 'Nothing will grow after we have gone! Nothing will bloom in this garden!' a girl about ten years old screamed in rage. ... They had loved it, nurtured it and watched over it and it had not heeded them or responded to their loving care.

For Japanese-Americans during the Second World War, gardening was an act of defiance against the harsh physi-

cal conditions of the California desert to which they were confined. Those interned showed remarkable resolve and ingenuity, using stone, cacti and bottle caps to create traditional Japanese landscapes; some even crafted Bonsai trees out of the indigenous sagebrush. Through gardening they domesticated a foreign and untamed landscape and to express their collective identity—"a way of taking possession through labor, design, creativity, use, and cultural signification."

As Helphand observes, "garden" is at once a noun and a verb, a place and an activity. In addition to offering refuge, gardens provide work and distraction. Prisoners of war turned to gardening to ward off "barbed-wire disease"—the feelings of helplessness and frustration bred by incarceration. In gardens, labor becomes liberating, not oppressive.

Defiant gardens persist to this day. Using seeds donated from home and employing local irrigation techniques, American soldiers work to make plants thrive in the arid, war-torn landscape of Iraq. As one serviceman in Tikrit

puts it, troops crave the simple "joy of growing something." Although gardens are by nature ephemeral— if left untended, they are quickly re-absorbed into the "chaos of nature." Nevertheless, they give a sense of permanence and stability. Reinforcing the reliable cycles of life is important when one is surrounded by death and destruction. Gardening is the antidote to "a day of dodging roadside bombs [and] RPGs."

Toward the end of the book, Helphand hits upon the idea of biophilia, the innate human instinct to seek out and relate to all forms of life.

Gardening expresses our fundamental evolutionary drives, and is thus "part of what makes us human." In times of peace and prosperity, we tend to take green for granted, and sometimes lose touch with this instinctual need. In moments of crisis, however, the commonplace becomes necessary.

In the end, *Defiant Gardens* serves not only as a compelling testament to the power of the human spirit but a reminder of the fundamental bond between Man and Nature. ■

FILM

Extreme Humanitarians

By Todd Lillethun

HANDLING GOOD SAMARITANS on film can be a daunting task. It's difficult not to have reverence for people who throw themselves into harm's way for the sake of helping others, but filmmakers still need to humanize them so that they won't appear out of reach to the audience. *Beyond the Call*, a new documentary by Adrian Belic, who directed the Academy Award nominated *Ghengis Blues*, falls prey to these pitfalls.

All the elements are present for a terrific story, so it's a shame the film does not rise to the occasion. The Samaritans in question belong to Knightsbridge International, a small nonprofit that circles the globe in search of humanitarian crises, led by the indefatigable Ed Artimis. After retiring from a career as a mortgage broker, Ed founded the organization in 1995 in order to provide aid quickly to foreign countries without the red tape generated by other organizations.

Living in a modest ranch house in the

spin cycle

BY JESSICA CLARK AND TRACY VAN SLYKE

What to Watch (or not) in 2007

It's been a year of navel-gazing for journalists. As William Powers recently noted in *National Journal*, "These days, almost everything in the media seems to be about the media"—and 2007 is shaping up to be another year of upheaval and overload. So what should we be keeping an eye on other than our collective bellybuttons? Here's a quick roundup.

Feeling masochistic? Then tune into Fox News Channel's forthcoming "Daily Show" knockoff. As yet untitled, the pilot show is being produced by the co-creator of "24," and

co-hosted by comedians Kurt Long (late of the Sci Fi Channel's "Scare Tactics") and Susan Yeagley (most recently featured in VH1's "Best Week Ever" series).

But take heart: A new option for frustrated news-lovers may soon be available: The Real News, a viewer-funded, 24-7 progressive online news channel. Find out more at www.iwtnews.com/plan.

Yet such alternatives may be short-lived if the telecom industry has anything to say about it: it's been lobbying Congress nonstop for the right to charge Web site proprietors extra to use their proposed high-speed lines. Tune into the issue by

visiting www.savetheinternet.com. With the defeat of HR5252, the net neutrality fight will heat up again as the new Congress goes into session. A free and open Internet is the best chance for original and independent programming to flourish, but as Jeannine Kenney, senior policy analyst at Consumers Union, warns, "Industry will be back with their money and phony grassroots groups."

Bored at the box office? Take a gander at the Media that Matters Film Festival, www.mediathatmatters-fest.org, a juried online showcase of short films on diverse topics that "spark debate and action

in 8 minutes or less." Selections from the most recent festival include shorts on Congolese women's reproductive health fights, a battle over the rising cost of water in Michigan, and the importance of asparagus, among others.

Or maybe this is the year to step down your media consumption and make some news of your own: digital audio and video gadgets are getting cheaper and better by the month. Check out www.newassignment.net for the latest scoop on innovations in citizen journalism.

Los Angeles suburbs, Ed wakes up in the middle of the night to check his e-mail and sift through the pile of letters he receives every week, each a cry for help half a world away. He regrets how few he is able to respond to, and chooses his assignments based on a quixotic mix of urgency and risk.

With donated supplies, and on his own dime, he flies to the crisis at hand. In Afghanistan, he delivers food and tents to cold and hungry villagers shortly before the U.S. invasion. While U.S. bombs explode in the distance, he ponders the misery the Taliban has caused, and laments about how most people in America never leave their own backyards.

In nearby Tajikistan, he barter with a food broker and then pays him to sneak truckloads of food over the border to more starving villagers. He says, "I just paid \$38,000 in cash to a total stranger for food that I don't even know exists." Indeed it does, and the next day the delivery is made as promised.

Two other middle-aged men join the cause to make the missions with him: Jim Laws, a cardiologist, and Walt Ratterman, a solar power expert. Jim provides expert medical assistance and a cool head to his work. He also indulges in playboy eccentricities at home by collecting military vehicles and Napoleon artifacts, and riding a scale model railroad in his backyard. Walt works on a farm, is very bright and soft-spoken, and lives a relatively simple life. Their personalities and expertise balance each other out, but this is mostly Ed's movie. Interviews at Jim's estate feature Jim reminiscing about past missions and considering what a quiet life he might be leading if it weren't for meeting Ed.

Fueled by a sort of weekend warrior mentality—what might be called "Extreme Humanitarianism"—their missions are typically set in distant locales during or after some violent upheaval. Their flak jackets resemble rock concert tour T-shirts, with "Relief Missions" stitched on the back over a list of all the countries to which they've traveled.

After awhile, though, all this selflessness and goodwill makes the film feel more like a recruiting vehicle than a documentary. Some of the darker aspects of their work, such as when Jim talks about having a curse put on him when a child dies in his arms, receive

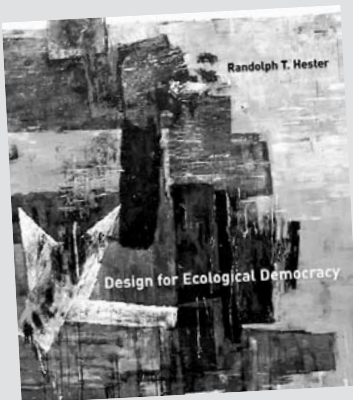
excerpt



Impelled by Joy

In his new book, Design for Ecological Democracy, Randolph T. Hester, a professor at University of California, Berkeley and longtime urban activist, calls for planning cities with both people and nature in mind. Such cities, he argues, nurture both the communities and those that inhabit them.

We need to reform our cities to impel us by joy rather than compel us by insecurity, fear, and force. The urbanism of mindless free enterprise compels us through insecurity. Domsday regulators compel us through fear and force. Neither is appropriate in an ecological democracy. We must, instead, make cities that impel us because they touch our hearts. Even though future habitation may be fundamentally different than today's, it will derive from recognizable everyday patterns. Impelling form invites us to our natural selves. It inhabits our daily lives with the science that is needed to help us be good citizens and also to enrich us. Good cities make us conscious of our oneness with and distinctive-



ness within the ecosystem, which results in a sense of identity with the places we live, relatedness, and child-like awe. Impelling form produces multiple avenues for stewardship that make both the earth and the stewards themselves healthier. Impelling form provides a variety of urban tempos from light speed to snail's pace. Such cities exude joy. They acknowledge grief and despair, but above all, they celebrate lives. An impelling city uplifts us in spite of all else. That is the wonder of good cities.

little attention. And instead of exploring some of Ed's contradictions, the film settles for simple moralizing: "We are all brothers and sisters," "You have to belong to a cause that's bigger than yourself," etc.

At one point, Ed and his team attempt to deliver food and medical supplies to a village in the Philippines, but are stopped by a guerrilla soldier guarding the road. The soldier doesn't understand Ed's request and dismisses him, where-by Ed begins fuming and demands to know the man's name, presumably in order to file a complaint. Jim calmly defuses the situation, but Ed is inconsolable and is ready to call off the whole mission. Jim later admits that Ed's demanding manner sometimes gets in the way, but the episode is otherwise brief and the chance to reveal a perceived chink in Ed's armor slips past.

Films such as *Sister Helen* and *Born into Brothels* stand out as more successful at handling the "sainthood" dilemma. *Sister Helen* couches her personal mission in terms of her own troubled life experience, and the filmmakers in *Born Into Brothels* are often critical of their own motives. The tension between work and personal conflicts make the heroes in both films heroic and compelling. *Beyond the Call* fails to dig much deeper than its reverence for its subjects.

And yet in the end the film still strongly makes the case for helping others less fortunate. The contrast between the dust-bitten mountains of Afghanistan, with its impoverished villages and desperate faces, and Walt's farm in rural Pennsylvania, with its bucolic landscape and solar-powered machines, speaks volumes. ■

BY TERRY J. ALLEN

Iraqi Health Care: Hostage to War



ZAINAB MAY BE one of the 655,000 Iraqis who would be alive today if the Bush administration hadn't launched its criminally conceived and executed war. Violence caused most of the excess deaths. But

54,000 people died from non-violent causes, such as heart disease, cancer and chronic illness. They were victims of a health care system eviscerated by mismanagement, ill-placed priorities, corruption and civil war.

The body count does not come from the U.S. government—which either does not bother to track, or won't release, the Iraqi death toll—but from a survey by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Baghdad's Al Mustansiriya University, published in *The Lancet*.

Four years ago, just before the invasion, Zainab, age 10, sat small and dignified on a hard plastic chair in a featureless room in a Baghdad hospital. An IV dripped poison into her outstretched arm. Her leukemia was going into remission and she was pink-cheeked and doing well. Despite the shortage of medicine and care created by combined efforts of Saddam and U.S. sanctions, the medical system still functioned.

Pre-Gulf War Iraq was “believed to have the best health care system in the Mideast, so it had enough altitude that it could fall some and still survive,” says Gilbert Burnham, principal author of the Johns Hopkins survey.

Today, the country's health care is in free fall. Most of the \$1 billion that Washington transfused into the medical system has bled out through the open wounds of wars. Of the 34,000 doctors in Iraq at the time of the invasion, more than half are gone. Most fled

the country; 2,000 were murdered.

“Senior doctors, especially surgeons, have left, and patients are seen by inexperienced physicians,” Dr. A., who requested anonymity, told *In These Times*. He left a Baghdad hospital in July to study in the United States.

Zainab may have finished treatment before the system collapsed around her and joined the 85 percent of childhood leukemia patients who survive. But this was March 2003, and, as you know, things would not be going well.

Today, patients like Zainab die daily from treatable illnesses and injuries. “That translates to more than 1,800 preventable deaths a year at [one Baghdad] hospital alone,” according to the *Los Angeles Times*, which quoted Iraqi physician Husam Abud: “[I]f we get cases of cancer, we can't treat them. They'll probably end their days here.”

Making things worse, the Ministry of Health is controlled by Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's movement, “ignorant people who know nothing about medical science,” a doctor told Inter-Press Service (IPS) reporters Dahr Jamail and Ali Al-Fadhily.

More than ignorant, the clerics charged with protecting Iraqis' health are part of sectarian militias with military, political and religious agendas. The “guards” they place in hospitals are an ominous presence. “They are wearing Ministry of Health uniforms,” says Dr. A., “but everyone knows they are part of Sadr's militia. Of course, they are armed with machine guns.”

Everyone suffers, but Sunnis disproportionately. “We have no medications or blood serum supplies,” Tariq Hiali, a health official in mainly Sunni Baqubah told the *Los Angeles Times*. “The Minis-

try of Health is not providing us with medications and medical equipment; they consider [us] terrorists.”

Which means fair game in the escalating civil war. One doctor told IPS that ministry-controlled militiamen have “divert[ed] the ministry into a death squad headquarters.”

“Sunni patients are being murdered; some are dragged from their beds,” CBS News reported. “A man was bringing his murdered brother to the [hospital] morgue. They asked him if he knew who the killers were and he said ‘yes.’ They shot him right there,” said a medical worker.

Little wonder that physicians like Dr. A. have joined Iraq's 1.6 million post-invasion refugees.

Medical personnel remaining in Iraq have

shown dedication and courage. They face shortages, death threats and kidnapping, as well as inadequate supplies that increase mortality, patient suffering and nosocomial infections.

And when militias dispense “security,” simply providing care is dangerous. “A doctor was attacked by [Ministry of Health] guards in Al Yarmook Hospital because he was preventing the guards from interfering in the medical care,” says Dr. A. “The doctors complained to the ministry that they cannot work in such an environment, and they held a one-day strike.”

Increasingly, the whole country is a fatally hostile environment, where people like Zainab die routinely from bad health care and worse policies. If she did not survive Iraq's medical free fall, she was a casualty of war, as surely as the 600,000 felled by bullets and bombs. ■



Zainab before the war

CONTACT Terry J. Allen at tallen@igc.org


classified

ACTIVISM

WWW.SAGACIOUS-SMARTASS.COM

BOOKLETS

SCHOLARLY BOOKLET PROVES JESUS NEVER EXISTED!
Conclusive proof Romans (Flavius Josephus) created fictional Jesus, Gospels. AMAZING but **Absolutely Incontrovertible!** Send \$10 to Reuchlin Foundation, Box 5652-C, Kent WA 98064. SASE for details.



BOOKS

LOVELIFE: IRREVERENT, APHORISTIC testament. Gratis from Solus, P.O. Box 111, Porthill, ID 83853

DEFAUDINGAMERICA.COM SITE FOR COLLEGE education on history of government intrigue from former government insiders. Free book downloads and blog. www.defaudingamericablog.com

DVDS

SIR! NO SIR! The Ground Truth; Sophie Scholl: The Final Days; Why We Fight & more! www.donnellycolt.com (860) 455-9621

EVENTS

"COLLEGE OF COMPLEXES— Chicago's weekly free speech forum— www.collegeofcomplexes.org."

INDEPENDENT VOTERS OF Illinois— open monthly meetings of the National Affairs Committee, Chicago, www.iviipona.org, cpaidock@hotmail.com or (312) 939-5105.

MERCHANDISE

RAGE AGAINST THE Bush machine. Find cool anti-Bush/progressive t-shirts, stickers, and other sassy gear on one of the largest anti-Bush web sites. Visit us at: www.toplebush.com.

WAR IS NOT THE ANSWER
FCNL.ORG



FREE BUMPER STICKER. Call 1-800-630-1330, or see fcnl.org. Friends Committee on National Legislation.

NEWSLETTERS

www.peacebuttons.info
Making peace more visible every day.
buttons, shirts, postcards, stickers, signs, coasters, peace quotes & more ...
Weekly peace history newsletter



PERSONALS

Concerned Singles
since 1984, linking singles who care about peace, social justice, diversity, gender equity, and the environment.
Nationwide / international. All ages.
FREE SAMPLE: ✉ Box 444-IT, Lenox Dale, MA 01242; ☎ (413) 243-4350; OR www.concernedsingles.com

WEB SITES

WWW.LIBERALSWITHGUNS.COM

OUTSIDE THE BOX! Secular, spiritual, blogs, books. www.karlroebling.com

DAVID HALBERSTAM IS retarded, McCain cowardly. www.geocities.com/ZYF1092

DONATE \$1.00 TO help playwright produce play. www.tragicdeathof-femperortitus.com

Bush SCREWED America
Impeach Bush/Cheney NOW!
arguments • resources • and more supporting impeachment
www.bushSCREWEDamerica.com

"... the most extraordinary theoretical perspective ever lent to the American Constitution."

— Prof. Victor G. Rosenblum,
Northwestern University Law School

The Twenty-First Century Left Cognitions in the Constitution and Why Buckley Is Wrong
(2nd edition)

By William P. Kreml

Save 10% by ordering online
from Carolina Academic Press
www.caplax.com or 1-800-489-7486

Reach more than 30,000 readers by placing a classified ad in the next issue of *In These Times*.

| TEXT (PER ISSUE) | | DISPLAY (PER ISSUE) | |
|------------------|----------|---------------------|-----------|
| 1-2 | 95¢ WORD | 1-2 | \$30 INCH |
| 3-5 | 85¢ WORD | 3-5 | \$28 INCH |
| 6-9 | 80¢ WORD | 6-9 | \$26 INCH |
| 10-19 | 75¢ WORD | 10-19 | \$24 INCH |
| 20+ | 65¢ WORD | 20+ | \$22 INCH |

Please send a check or money order, your ad text, and this form to Erin Polgreen, Advertising and Marketing Coordinator, *In These Times*, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave, Chicago, IL 60647.

You can also reserve space by calling Erin at (773) 772-0100, x225, or by sending an e-mail to erin@inthesetimes.com

**SUPPORT INDEPENDENT MEDIA
DONATE TO *IN THESE TIMES***

Make your tax-deductible donation today!
VISIT: inthesetimes.com/donate

'Non-Lethal'

Continued from back page

U.S. C-SOG is a corrections training firm specializing in emergency tactical operations for penal institutions; it boasts of having relationships with more than 4,000 correctional institutions in 14 countries. The companies describe ShockRounds as a "safe, less-lethal" product designed to provide correctional employees with a new way to subdue inmates and to quell "serious crowd disturbances and threat situations."

Set phaser to stun

Raytheon, based in Palo Alto, Calif., is also testing numerous "non-lethal" weapons for military use, with funding from the National Institute of Justice. According to FOIA documents obtained by the U.S. Sunshine Project (www.sunshine-project.org), Raytheon's Pulsed Energy Projectiles (PEPs) fire a laser burst of expanding plasma—a collection of charged particles containing equal parts positive ions and electrons. (In science fiction terms, this could best be described as a "raygun.")

PEPs can be used from as far as two kilometers away, and are designed to create severe and debilitating pain resulting in temporary paralysis. Of particular concern is the fact that PEPs, apparently ready for use as early as 2007, are being investigated for use against "rioters," according to the British science magazine *New Scientist*.

And an Anderson, Ind.-based company, Xtreme Alternative Defense Systems (XADS), is marketing their Close Quarters Shock Rifle to the military. The Shock Rifle projects plasma toward a target, and can be used for shutting down the ignition systems of vehicles, as well as for crowd control.

According to a *New Scientist* interview with XADS president Peter Bitar, the weapon can fire "a stream of electricity like water out of a hose at one or many targets in a single sweep." An even more advanced form of the weapon may have a range of more than 300 feet. *New Scientist* noted that this version would utilize a tabletop-sized laser to produce an intense pulse that would ionize the air itself. The process would produce "long, thread-like filaments of glowing plasma that [could] be sustained by repeating the pulse every

few milliseconds." The effect would be one of a shock similar to that of one of Taser's 50,000-volt stun guns.

That burning sensation

Raytheon is also pursuing a microwave-technology-based weapon, named the Active Denial System (ADS), which fires a 95-gigahertz beam at its targets. Thus far, what is known about ADS is that people hit by the weapon's beam experience a sharp rise in body heat and severe pain within five seconds of contact, an experience that is supposed to prompt targets to run in the other direction. A vehicle-mounted version of the weapon is already being designed for use in Iraq, while other portable versions are being designed for both U.S. Marine Corps and domestic law enforcement use.

A 2005 Reuters article noted that tests of the weapon have taken place at the Kirtland Air Force base in Albuquerque, N.M. As a part of those tests, researchers first made sure that participants removed all glasses, contact lenses and metal objects like keys, to prevent serious injury—of course, the conditions of real-world use are less controlled.

"How do you ensure that the dose doesn't cross the threshold for permanent damage?" asked Neil Davison, coordinator of the non-lethal weapons research project at Britain's Bradford University, in the Reuters article. Notably, one controlled test in New Mexico has already

resulted in serious injury to a test subject, apparently after a higher-than-normal ADS power level setting was used.

Not so harmless

"Non-lethal" is still the operative term with all of these new weapons, but civilian experience with Taser stun guns shows that "non-lethal" means "usually not lethal." Since 2001, roughly 200 people have died after being stunned with Tasers. Taser International, Inc., attributes all of the deaths to other causes, including acute intoxication and "excited delirium." The U.S. Department of Justice has launched an investigation to review some of those deaths.

The rapid evolution of electricity-based weaponry raises concerns for abuse by governments and law enforcement agencies that have already demonstrated a propensity to use electrical shock weaponry as a form of torture.

During a March 2005 debate with Taser CEO Rick Smith, Amnesty International USA's William Schulz pointed out that "stun technology in general is one of the most widely used instruments of torture around the world."

Human rights advocates everywhere should bear that in mind. The new wave of shock technology isn't just around the corner—it's already here. ■

Thanks to the Nation Institute's Investigative Fund for research support.



GEORGIE LOVES IT WHEN I SHOW HIM THE PICTURES!

CHENEY

GREAT GIFT IDEA!

CHEAP LAUGHS AT BUSH'S EXPENSE! SUBSCRIBE TO THE

HUMOR TIMES!

HILARIOUS POLITICAL CARTOONS, AS WELL AS HUMOR COLUMNS & NON-POLITICAL PANELS!

YES, FOR LESS THAN ONE NIGHT AT THE MOVIES, YOU CAN GIVE THE GIFT OF LAUGHTER! GO TO WWW.HUMORTIMES.COM OR SEND A CHECK OR MONEY ORDER FOR ONLY \$17⁹⁵ (12 ISSUES)

TO: Humor Times, P.O. Box 162429
Sacramento, CA 95816

ALSO... SAMPLE ISSUES CAN BE HAD FOR MERELY \$1⁰⁰ !!!

HUMOR TIMES — GOOD FOR AMERICA!



'NON-LETHAL' WEAPONRY: THE NEXT GENERATION

BY SILJA J.A. TALVI



LASMA CLOUDS, MICROWAVE BEAMS, electrified bullets—military contractors have been developing futuristic new combat technologies under the public radar. Already, the TASER stun gun has emerged from the pages of speculative fiction, and into the hands of military, corrections, and law enforcement personnel (See “Stunning Revelations,” November 2006). But stun technology is just one tool in the arsenal for developers of proposed “non-lethal” weapons.

Guard that perimeter

For the past several years, Taser International, Inc. has been testing products with the military market in mind. Most recently it has been working on Tasernet, a weapon it describes as a “non-lethal area denial and force protection system.” In October, the Taser Remote Area Denial (T-RAD) concept was officially unveiled at the annual United States Army meeting in Washington, D.C.

When used in tandem with what Taser bills as the “companion computer networking system,” Tasernet, the defensive weaponry amounts to a “Star Trek”-style forcefield, stunning uninvited guests. Tasernet can capture digital facial scans, allowing authorized users through the forcefield. According to Taser’s press release, the T-RAD, based on the Taser X26 core technology, is “designed to be deployed at checkpoints, facility perimeters, embassies, airports, and other critical infrastructures.” The weapon is expected to be ready for deployment in 2008.

Projectiles with a zing

In July, three inventors applied for a U.S. patent on research that would enable the creation of wire-free, “piezoelectric” stun guns. (Piezoelectric crystals generate voltage in response to mechanical vibrations—“piezo” means “push” in Greek.) In their patent application, the inventors explain that their invention would create darts containing an explosive charge, which detonate upon contact with pierced skin. The guns could be used from a distance of nearly 500 feet.

In September 2005, the U.S. Correctional Special Operations Group (U.S. C-SOG) and the Australia-based Harrington Group also announced an agreement to develop weapons capable of introducing a piezoelectric charge to “traditional ammunition and other projectiles such as rubber bullets,” according to a jointly issued press release. With a patent pending, the two companies have trademarked the weapon technology under the name “ShockRounds.”

▲ CONTINUED ON PAGE 47 ▲